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## MUSKETS IN MISERY SWAMP: AN INVESTIGATION INTO A KING PHILIP'S WAR BATTLE

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MUSKETS IN MISERY SWAMP: AN INVESTIGATION INTO A KING PHILIP'S  
WAR BATTLE

BY  
LAURA DAMON

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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IN  
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MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

OF

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## **Abstract**

On August 12, 1676, Benjamin Church, an English colonizer and military leader, led a company of Englishmen and Indian allies in an attack on a group of Wampanoags with the goal of killing the Wampanoag sachem known as Metacomet, Metacom, or King Philip. According to colonial records, the attack took place at Mount Hope in Bristol, Rhode Island during King Philip's War. This conflict began in southern Massachusetts in June 1675 and eventually engulfed most of New England. The Wampanoags and English fought on opposing sides.

This study will analyze the attack that resulted in Philip's death, guided by the question: How did the colonial forces, with their Indian allies, defeat the group of Wampanoags they fell upon? The major argument that underlies this study is that Indian war tactics- adopted by the English in the final and fatal attack on Philip, rather than a disparity in weaponry between the two sides- helped assure the military victory. The relative equity in military hardware supports the assertion that the use of Indian war tactics was more influential than advanced weaponry in determining battle victories.

Investigation of these questions is difficult due to a lack of Native American written accounts of the attack. The problem is partially remedied using archaeological evidence. The colonial weapons buried with Native Americans at a seventeenth-century Wampanoag burial ground suggests a level of value attributed to them, and supports historic accounts of the Indians' use of colonial weapons during King Philip's War. This study will also examine how King Philip's War, specifically the attack which resulted in Philip's death, is remembered today and how the conflict fits into the broader history of colonial Rhode Island.

Chapter One introduces the study. Chapter Two details what historians and researchers have argued about the reasons for colonial victory. Chapter Three is a cultural comparison of weapons and war tactics between the English and Native Americans. It will demonstrate that Native Americans adopted and mastered European weapons, which helped level the wartime playing field and narrowed military discrepancies. This in turn suggests that other factors- such as the adoption of Native American war tactics- more heavily contributed to battle victories. Chapter Four focuses on archaeology; it details the archaeological study of Burr's Hill, a seventeenth-century Wampanoag burial ground. Chapter Five analyzes the final attack on Philip using historical and archaeological evidence and demonstrates the use of Native American military tactics by the English colonists and their Native American allies; it also explains the archaeological significance of the site where Philip allegedly fell. Chapter Six discusses how the attack and the overall war is remembered in Rhode Island with writings, monuments and events. Chapter Seven is the conclusion.

## **Acknowledgements**

Dr. Rod Mather, Dr. Catherine DeCesare, Dr. Kristine Bovy.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The *Mayflower* departed England and made way for the New World in 1620.<sup>1</sup> She carried 102 English passengers considered to be Separatists, the people on the very fringe of the Puritan movement. Puritans rejected the Church of England and desired to purge the church of all unnecessary rituals and expenses; they desired simpler lives.<sup>2</sup> As people who had resolved to draw away from the Church of England rather than working for a change within the established church, they were considered radicals.<sup>3</sup>

Massasoit, the Wampanoag leader, greeted the pilgrims in 1621.<sup>4</sup> Fifty- four years later his son Metacom would go to war against the English. It's not entirely clear why or how the war started when it did, but once it began it was virtually merciless.<sup>5</sup> The Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Nipmucks, Pocomtucks and Abenakis attacked and burned English towns and slaughtered its inhabitants; the English, with occasional aid from Mohegans, Pequots, Mohawks and Christian Indians, burned, murdered and sold prisoners into slavery.<sup>6</sup> Jill Lepore, professor of American history at Harvard University, argues that "both sides practiced torture, and mutilation of the dead."<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, the English colonists were victorious.

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<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel Philbrick, *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War* (New York: Viking, 2006), xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Bert Lippincott, reference librarian and genealogist at the Newport Historical Society, telephone interview by author, Oct. 20, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Philbrick, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*, (New York: Vintage, 1999), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



There were a number of factors which led to the colonial victory in King Philip's War. Writers, historians and researchers have allotted varying amounts of weight to these factors. Some Englishmen who wrote during and immediately after the war attributed the colonial victory to God. Some contemporary historians and researchers argue for the English superiority in weapons; while others more heavily attribute the colonists' success on their adoption and successful execution of Indian war tactics.

The colonial and Indian forces both had sufficient arsenals. There is evidence that Indians readily adopted colonial guns and used them to supplement their aboriginal arsenal. Whatever benefits the guns offered, the Indians reaped; they grew skilled and efficient in their use. Firearms, especially flintlock muskets, were an excellent addition to their forest warfare. Their possession of guns coupled with their knowledge of the land and hunting skills made the Indians a particularly strong threat. Yet the colonists ultimately won the war. With a sufficient arsenal and acute forest warfare skills, why did the Indians lose King Philip's War? For most of the Indians, defeat translated to enslavement following the war, seizure of their land and colonial control of the historical narrative.

Historians have highlighted the various factors that contributed to the colonial victory in King Philip's War. I argue that Indian-style war tactics adopted by the English more heavily contributed to the colonial victory, more so than a wide discrepancy in weapons between the two sides. This is because both the Indians and English were relatively even-handed when it came to their arsenals. In the final and fatal attack on Philip, Benjamin Church and his soldiers used the Indian-style war tactic of ambush to target and kill Philip and capture his band of followers. The war waned and ended shortly

thereafter. I combine historical, archaeological and cultural landscape evidence to provide a more holistic examination of the importance of military tactics in King Philip's War and how the war is remembered today.

### **A Note on Names**

I use words like English, Indian, Native American, colonist, native inhabitant and indigenous people to identify and describe the seventeenth-century people I analyzed in this study. Indian was a hard word to settle on; since the word is coined by the English it felt less authentic and more offensive, but it is the word used by many scholars of American history. Plus, it's a word employed by some descendants of indigenous people in Rhode Island today.<sup>8</sup> Colonist, native inhabitant and indigenous people felt appropriate and sensitive. But identity, really, is too complex for words. Christine DeLucia, an associate professor of history at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, who researches and teaches early American history and indigenous studies with a focus on race, ethnicity and colonialism, wrote in "The Memory Frontier" of the Sacred Run and Paddle, a commemorative event on October 30, 2010. The event commemorated the forced removal of Nipmuc and other Eastern Algonquian peoples from their homes to Deer Island in Boston Harbor, where they were confined during the winter of 1675–1676. At the event, "not one participant identified foremost as Indian," Christine DeLucia wrote. "They called themselves Nipmuc, Wampanoag (Mashpee or Aquinnah), Ponkapoag, Abenaki, Penobscot."<sup>9</sup> Whenever possible, the Native Americans referred to in this text will be allotted their tribal affiliations, but when specific identification is not

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<sup>8</sup> Narragansett Indian Tribe, "The Narragansett Indian Tribe," Narragansett Indian Tribe, accessed November 20, 2018, [NarragansettIndianNation.org](http://NarragansettIndianNation.org).

<sup>9</sup> Christine DeLucia, "The Memory Frontier: Uncommon Pursuits of Past and Place in the Northeast after King Philip's War," *The Journal of American History* 98 (March 2012): 977.

possible, the words Indian or Native American will be used. These words aren't perfect, but many words fail to encapsulate the complexities and nuances of a person or a people. DeLucia wrote: "In the realm of lived experience there has rarely been a coherent American identity, and certainly not a monolithic Indian one, but instead finer-grained levels of loyalty and comprehension where memories are plural and shifting."<sup>10</sup>

Wampanoag can be thought of as designating a united political group of territorial village units, bounded on the west by Narragansett Bay and the Pawtuxet River; to the east was the Atlantic Ocean. The Wampanoag included the inhabitants of Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and Aquidneck Island.<sup>11</sup> There were nine territorial subdivisions which comprised the federation of Wampanoag, the leading division being Pokanoket, home of the supreme sachem, Massasoit (otherwise known as Ousamequin).<sup>12</sup> Out of all the New England aboriginal tribes in the seventeenth century, this study focuses on the Wampanoags.

It is hard to limit war and its effects on the people who experienced it in words. Even the labeling of the events that are here discussed as "King Philip's War" is problematic. Some argue the conflict be called a "Puritan Conquest" while others champion the name "Metacom's Rebellion," insisting Philip is more accurately referred to by his Algonquian name, Metacom (also rendered "Metacomet" or "Pometacom"); others insist the seventeenth-century events be referred to as an Indian civil war.<sup>13</sup> Jill Lepore argues that all wars have at least two names; what most Americans call the "Civil

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Christina B. Johannsen, , "European Trade Goods and Wampanoag Culture in the Seventeenth Century," in *Burr's Hill, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Wampanoag burial ground in Warren, Rhode Island*, ed. Susan Gibson, *Studies in anthropology and material culture* (Providence, Rhode Island: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, 1980), 25.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Lepore, xv.

War” has been called by northerners “The War of the Rebellion” and by southerners the “War of Northern Aggression.” Lepore argues that “names of wars are always biased; they always privilege one perspective over another.”<sup>14</sup>

My words are flawed, but most are.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

Different centuries yield different writers and different trends regarding the descriptions of events. Though an entire group of people and their complex emotions and thoughts can't be discerned wholly and accurately from the writings of only a certain number of them, written records grant glimpses into the mentalities of individuals, who are, at least partially, products of their environment.

The colonial-era scribes argued that the violent confrontations in King Philip's War were won or lost due to divine will. As the years progressed, writers emerged who had not experienced the war first-hand but heard and read narratives. These writers examined the war through a difference cultural lens and offered evaluations only possible with hindsight. Nineteenth century writers did not attribute the colonial victory so heavily to divine intervention; they outlined other reasons for the Indian defeat, like the adoption of aboriginal military techniques by the colonists and their recruitment of Native American soldiers. Arguments defining either weapon sophistication or military tactics as the most definitive variables in wartime victories are popular among twenty and twenty-first century writers, but the twenty and twenty-first century historiographies are even more varied than previous centuries. This chapter will examine how writers in different centuries interpreted the war, starting with the earliest writers in the seventeenth century.

### **Interpretations of the war by seventeenth-century writers**

More than four hundred letters written during the war survive in New England archives alone; there are more than thirty editions of twenty different printed accounts. Though the early historiography of the war is extensive, no one narrative emerged among the seventeenth-century writers of King Philip's War.<sup>15</sup> The historiography of the war began immediately after the war ended, before the trials concluded and the enslavement and death sentences to the indigenous people were carried out. Why did the colonists write about their experiences and their thoughts and feelings, and why were their accounts published so quickly?

In part, writing serves as an organizational tool for human thoughts; it's a method of understanding and explaining events that are difficult to reconcile, such as war. Words, definitions and explanations make life- a seemingly limitless phenomenon- more limited. Writing serves as an organizational outlet for the thoughts that seemingly have no end or limits in the human mind or in oral communication; writing requires the production of tangible evidence, and tangible evidence for the colonists meant something concrete for them to hold onto in the midst of such chaos. In part, the act of transcribing their experiences helped the colonists on individual levels make sense of what happened. Defining and transcribing King Philip's War also allowed the colonists to gain control of the historical narrative. The written records coupled with the extermination or enslavement of the indigenous people encouraged later generations to rely heavily on colonial accounts to piece together and understand what created, sustained and ended the conflict known as King Philip's War.

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<sup>15</sup> Lepore, Ch. 2.

Increase Mather was not a soldier in King Philip's War, but he was an associate of most of the colonial leadership and was considered a spiritual advisor to the war effort.<sup>16</sup> Mather's *A Brief History of the Warr* was first published in Boston in 1676.<sup>17</sup> Mather writes that he pulled from his diary entries to put *A Brief History* together; diary entries that he penned in the midst of the conflict. His history documents events through 1676 (hostilities in southern, central and western New England ended that year, though fighting continued in areas of Maine until 1678).<sup>18</sup> Mather claims he wrote the history in the first place because two other accounts of the war were mistaken; he acts the part of the righteous historian, claiming to provide an accurate and un-biased history for readers.<sup>19</sup>

Mather writes that King Philip's War happened because the colonists failed to please God. He calls the sins of the colonists ripe; they deserved so "dreadfull a judgment" as a war.<sup>20</sup> The war happened because the next "Generation" did not doggedly pursue "the blessed design of their Fathers, in following the Lord into this Wilderness."<sup>21</sup> He reasons that certain events happened because of divine intervention. Mather details the tragic tale of John Sausaman, an Indian who apparently betrayed Philip and confided in the English in 1674. Sausaman was subsequently murdered and three Indians were found guilty for his death. Mather writes: "No doubt but one reason why the Indians murdered John Sassamon, was out of hatred against him for his Religion, for he was

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<sup>16</sup> Increase Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England (1676): An Online Electronic Text Edition*, ed. Paul Royster (Faculty Publications, UNL Libraries), <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/librarscience/31>, abstract.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Whenever possible the original spellings and capitalizations will be maintained when referencing colonial accounts, but sometimes modern grammatical tweaks will be made for the sake of clarity and flow.

Christianized and baptiz'd, and was a Preacher amongst the Indians.”<sup>22</sup> Mather argues John Sassamon was victimized for his love of God, and this prejudice among the Indian enemies towards the English faith sparked violence and the onset of the war; he effectively creates sympathy for the English, absolves them of guilt and paints the colonists as sympathetic to the Indians who chose to be Christianized.

In one particular instance early in the war, the English tracked King Philip but abandoned the chase. Mather argues that if the pursuit continued, Philip would have been captured and the war would have ended, “but though Deliverance was according to all Humane probability near, God saw it not good for us as yet.”<sup>23</sup> Whether right or wrong, Mather considers the unfolding of events in the New World as pre-destined and entirely controlled by God; it’s not the fault of the colonists that the war dragged on and the violence wasn’t immediately snuffed. Mather had faith that despite any instance of oppression or sorrow “our God will have compassion on us, and this his People shall not utterly perish.”<sup>24</sup> Mather reasons that the war dragged on so God could effectively crush the soul of King Philip: “Thus hath God brought that grand Enemy into great misery before he quite destroy him. It must needs be bitter as death to him, to [lose] his Wife and only Son...and almost all his Subjects and Country too.”<sup>25</sup> Mather writes that “God brought it to pass, chiefly by Indians themselves” when one of Philip’s men fled for Rhode Island and informed the English that Philip had “returned again to Mount-Hope, and undertook to bring them to the Swamp where he hid himself.”<sup>26</sup> “Divine Providence” guaranteed that Capt. Church was in Rhode Island to receive the intelligence which

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<sup>22</sup> Mather, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 71.



allowed the Wampanoag sachem to be destroyed, and the war to finally end.<sup>27</sup> Mather claims the “Gospel was freely offered to him, [King Philip] and to his Subjects, but they despised it.”<sup>28</sup> Mather asserts that the war could have been prevented had God been pleased; the English tried to save the Indians, but they would not listen and so God passed judgment.<sup>29</sup> Mather touts God as the ultimate variable in the colonial victory. He calls the aboriginal arsenal, specifically bows and arrows, woefully inefficient compared to the “lethality” of English guns and swords. But eventually the Indians acquired English firearms; Mather calls the Native Americans “unhappily furnished” with the English weapons.<sup>30</sup> He notes that the acquisition of European weapons put the Indians on an equal plane with the colonists in terms of killing technology, but Mather asserts weapons are pawns to God. The Indians lost the war because “the terror of God was upon them.”<sup>31</sup>

Born in 1639 to a Plymouth carpenter, Benjamin Church was raised to take up his father’s trade. But when King Philip’s War erupted in 1675, Church joined the colonial forces as a volunteer officer. He rose in rank and prominence in the Puritan military; his use of military tactics which were considered unorthodox and largely adapted from Algonquian influences distinguished him from other puritan leaders. And it was Church who, as a military captain, was commissioned by Gov. Josiah Winslow to descend upon Philip and his followers in the final and fatal attack on the Wampanoag sachem on August 12, 1675.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 71-73.

<sup>28</sup> Mather, 89.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Church and Thomas Church, *The Entertaining History of King Philip’s War* (Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 12352), <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.uri.idm.oclc.org>, 30-31; Philip Gould, “Reinventing Benjamin Church: Virtue, Citizenship and the History of King Philip’s War in Early National

*The Entertaining History of King Philip's War* was composed by Church's son, Thomas; Thomas Church transcribed his father's oral recollections and copied his wartime diaries to create the narrative.<sup>33</sup> In the introduction to the narrative, Church credits his survival in the war to the "over-ruling hand of the Almighty... I endeavored to put all my confidence in him, and by his almighty power was carried through every difficult action."<sup>34</sup> Like Mather, Church attributes all events and outcomes to the will of God; human choice seems to matter little, since the colonists are essentially acting as vessels for God's work and will. This mentality dually helps to absolve the English of guilt and comfort them, what transpired was no fault of their own but the will of God. The war was inevitable.

Philip Gould argues that the principal motifs of *An Entertaining History* are Church's heroism and his success in adapting an unorthodox style of military tactics to seal the Puritan victory.<sup>35</sup> Gould writes: "As a tale of military (mis)adventure, its largely secular appeal- despite its intermittent recourse to the guiding hand of divine Providence- distinguishes it from official histories of the war" like Mather's history and William Hubbard's *A Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians in New-England*.<sup>36</sup> Church exudes confidence in his military decisions and touts his own innovation and tactical genius. Even the title of Church's narrative- an "entertaining" history- alludes to the ensuing content. The tone of his narrative is more adventurous and fantastical than it is somber

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America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16, no. 4 (1996): 646, <http://www-jstor-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/stable/3124421>.

<sup>33</sup> Gould, 647.

<sup>34</sup> Church et al., iv.

<sup>35</sup> Gould, 647.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

and a means of post-wartime reconciliation. Church credits God, but he also credits his military prowess for the colonial victory.

William Hubbard, an orthodox Puritan minister, first published *A Narrative* in 1676. Like Mather and Church, Hubbard credits God for the colonial victory on August 12, 1676 in Rhode Island. He also credits Church, though Church was acting as a vessel of God's will.<sup>37</sup> He calls Captain Church's leadership a "great advantage" in wartime victories for the colonial forces.<sup>38</sup> When Hubbard describes the final and fatal attack on Philip, he said the Wampanoag sachem was "hunted by the English Forces through the Woods" until at least "driven to his own Den."<sup>39</sup> Philip and his followers were surrounded; the swamp they had retreated to "provided but a Prison...till the Messengers of death, came by Divine permission to execute vengeance upon him."<sup>40</sup> Hubbard asserts that it was the aggressive and tactical pursuit- military genius- that sealed King Philip's fate. Hubbard, in his re-telling of the final and fatal attack, doesn't focus on the hardware but on the ambush tactic and allots more weight to that factor than weaponry in determining the colonial victory. Like other seventeenth-century writers, Hubbard advances that God is always a pivotal factor in victories, defeats and all other life events.

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<sup>37</sup> William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England (1677)* (Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 231), <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.uri.idm.oclc.org>, 104.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

### Interpretations of the war by nineteenth-century writers

The colonial revival was a late nineteenth-century movement that encouraged interest in America's colonial heritage, especially on the East Coast; it tended to foster a sanitized view of the past “that seemed reassuring and morally sound in an era of rapid social transformation.”<sup>41</sup> Zachariah Allen (1795-1882), the president of the Rhode Island Historical Society when it was founded in 1822, and speaker and writer on historical topics, “was a principal architect of public memory during the state's colonial revival.”<sup>42</sup> Born in Providence and educated at Brown University, Allen built his fortune through textile enterprises, yet he remained a devoted champion and advocate for the past.<sup>43</sup> Allen paid homage to the grave site of Benjamin Church in Little Compton and personally funded renovations for the crumbling grave stone.<sup>44</sup> The grassroots efforts in the centuries proceeding the end of King Philip's War and before the twentieth century to memorialize the New England landscape was a legacy of Allen's. In a speech given by Allen before the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1876, the bi-centennial anniversary of the war, Allen highlights the importance of a cultural landscape in preserving the memory of a person or group of people. Narragansett Bay “will forever remain a memorial of their [the Narragansetts] existence,” Allen wrote.<sup>45</sup> He describes a region called “Massasoit's country,” which evolved into “Massachusetts.”<sup>46</sup> “If fame can be an offset to wrongs,” Allen stated, “this old chief is remunerated by affixing his name to one of the present

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<sup>41</sup> DeLucia, 982.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> DeLucia, 982.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Zachariah Allen, *Bi-centenary of the Burning of Providence in 1676: Defence of the Rhode Island System of Treatment of the Indians, and of Civil and Religious Liberty. An Address Delivered before the Rhode Island Historical Society, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1876* (Providence Press, 1876), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 5.

United States of America.”<sup>47</sup> But fame cannot offset wrongs, heal hearts or repair what was done to the people who inhabited the land before the English colonizers claimed it. Allen hoped that it might; that bloodshed and lands taken could be reconciled with the English naming of the stolen land. Citing Connecticut poet L.H. Sigourney, Allen stated “the red men will never be forgotten, while so many of our States, bays, lakes and rivers, are indelibly stamped with their names.”<sup>48</sup> From a contemporary point of view, we know this to be false; names can survive the test of time but their origins and meanings can be forgotten and their significance diminished. Allen argued that “to be remembered and honored in after ages is the object of human ambition.”<sup>49</sup> He recognized the individual actors in King Philip’s War, both Indian and English, and tried to honor them in the physical landscape. He states in his address to the Rhode Island Historical Society that “the fate of a nation depends on the conduct of a few leaders.”<sup>50</sup> Allen attributed outcome more on individual, personal choices- specifically the choices of military leaders- rather than God, a seventeenth-century trend.

Like Allen, George Bodge valued the fighters in King Philip’s War. Bodge focused on military veterans in his analysis of the conflict; he released his first edition of *Soldiers in King Philip's War* in 1892. His work was an effort to shed light on forgotten colonial military heroes who fought in King Philip's War. He identified soldiers, military committees and scouts in his lists of men who served the English cause.<sup>51</sup> At a eulogy for Philip at the Odeon in Boston in 1836, Indian Rev. William Apess (also spelled “Apes”) called Philip a martyr and one who will be remembered by his descendants. Though his

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Allen, 23.

<sup>51</sup> George Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War* (Printed for the author, 1896).

fight was unsuccessful, King Philip's War was "as glorious as the American Revolution"<sup>52</sup> and he described Philip as "the greatest man that ever lived upon the American shores."<sup>53</sup> Like Bodge, Apess highlighted the importance of main actors-people in leadership roles or prominent positions- in determining the outcomes of violent encounters. Apess said Philip would have been victorious "had it not been for Indians who were hired to fight against other Indians...though they [the pilgrims]<sup>54</sup> must acknowledge, that without the aid of Indians and their guides, they must inevitably have been swept off."<sup>55</sup> The pilgrims, also, deceived the Indians "as their word has never been fulfilled in regard to Indian rights" and it was through deception "that the pilgrims gained the country."<sup>56</sup> Apess asserted that the English were only victorious because they recruited Indian soldiers and used Indian military intelligence, and they secured these resources by promising the Indians land and life after the war, which they failed to give them.

### **Interpretations of the war by twenty and twenty-first century writers**

Many twenty and twenty-first century researchers acknowledge the power of written accounts, military leaders, military strategies, and technology in their analyses of factors that contributed to the colonial victory. The hallmark of the King Philip's War historiography in the twenty and twenty-first centuries is its depth and nuances compared to previous centuries. There's acknowledgement that King Philip's War was complex and the reasons for colonial victory multi-faceted.

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<sup>52</sup> William Apess, *Euology on King Philip, As Pronounced at the Odeon in Federal Street, Boston, by the Rev. William Apes, an Indian* (Gale, 2012), 6.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>54</sup> Brackets my own.

<sup>55</sup> Apess, 38.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Modern, general studies of Rhode Island history offer various interpretations of King Philip's War. In *Colonial Rhode Island: A History*, Sydney V. James argues that the English colonists' hunger for land sparked the conflict.<sup>57</sup> James argues that the English colonial victory in the attack on Philip was significantly aided by a divided Native American population, which echoes Apress; the Narragansetts attempted to find comrades in the Sakonnet branch of the Wampanoags only to find that they had allied with the English colonists. Eventually, “the Indian peoples who lived around Narragansett Bay were...exterminating each other.”<sup>58</sup> William G. McLoughlin in *Rhode Island: A History* offers a similar interpretation. McLoughlin argues that Rhode Islanders “saw the war as an aggressive effort by the Puritan colonies seeking to secure their claims to the land of the Wampanoags and Narragansetts.”<sup>59</sup> He emphasizes the divisions among the Native Americans. For example, in July 1676 the Wampanoags “failed to gain the help they sought from the Mohawks,” and Philip was killed the next month.<sup>60</sup> Patrick T. Conley argues for the importance of leaders in securing wartime victories. In his work *Rhode Island's Founders: From Settlement to Statehood*, Conley recounts the colonial history of Rhode Island by focusing on influential figures. In “Part I: The Pioneers,” he includes Native American leaders such as Massasoit and King Philip. Conley argues that the tides of war shifted in favor of the colonial forces in the spring of 1676 largely because of their “many Indian allies” and Philip's failure to unite local tribes to fight for him.<sup>61</sup> Charles Carroll's *Rhode Island: Three Centuries of Democracy*, published in 1932, is an

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<sup>57</sup> Sydney V. James, *Colonial Rhode Island: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 77.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>59</sup> William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1986), 42.

<sup>60</sup> McLoughlin, 44.

<sup>61</sup> Patrick T. Conley, *Rhode Island's Founders: From Settlement to Statehood* (Charleston: History Press, 2010), 60.

authoritative work on the history of the state that comprises four volumes. Carroll asserts that military tactics secured battle victories. In Volume I, Carroll argues that King Philip's War could have potentially been snuffed out "almost in the borning" if the English organized a military movement promptly and with "vigor and thoroughness."<sup>62</sup> Carroll asserts that the conflict ended when the colonists "undertook to carry the war to the Indians" through ambushes.<sup>63</sup>

Francis Jennings argues in *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* that determinist theories attributing military victories to forces beyond human control are the products of people who wish to absolve themselves of any remorse in regards to the conquering of another group of people.<sup>64</sup> The determinist theories of seventeenth-century writers attribute victory to God; a force that's beyond human and a force that makes victory pre-destined. Jennings argues that human choices determine military victories, and he allots ample credit to the power of colonial written narratives in securing victory. Jennings writes that European "invaders" to colonial-era America:

...anticipated, correctly, that other Europeans would question the morality of their enterprise. They therefore made preparations of two sorts: guns and munitions to overpower Indian resistance and quantities of propaganda to overpower their countrymen's scruples. The propaganda gradually took standard form as an ideology with conventional assumptions and semantics. We live with it still.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Charles Carroll, *Rhode Island: Three Centuries of Democracy* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, Co., 1932), 1: 40.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>64</sup> Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (University of North Carolina Press, 1975), vii.

<sup>65</sup> Jennings, 22.



He acknowledges the importance of material resources- guns and munitions- to physically quell and eventually overwhelm the Indians, but written propaganda played a role in war too. Jennings argues that the English colonists engaged in the “pervasive calculated deception of the official records.”<sup>66</sup> Of the power of human agency and written narratives, he writes:

Persons and groups reaching for illicit power customarily assume attitudes of great moral rectitude to divert attention from the abandonment of their own moral standards of behavior. Deception of the multitude becomes necessary to sustain power, and the deception of others rapidly progresses to deception of self. All conquest atrocities have followed such paths. It would be incredible if ours had not.<sup>67</sup>

James Drake, in his work *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676*, maintains that it should not be assumed that the English and the Native Americans had inevitably been headed toward a violent confrontation.<sup>68</sup> “Inevitability,” he claims, assumes a force beyond human control that initiated the fighting. In writing his book, Drake contends that the outcome of the violent intermingling between colonists and original inhabitants depended more upon human choices and motives than upon impersonal forces.<sup>69</sup> Drake argues that many historians make the colonial victory seem inevitable by pointing to factors such as numbers, technology, access to supplies and culture.<sup>70</sup> But Drake maintains that neither the size of an army nor its access to technology and supplies necessarily determines success. During the Vietnam War: “American forces ostensibly had superior weaponry and finances and won the majority of battles, yet ultimately they suffered defeat. Such examples raise doubts about the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>68</sup> James Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Drake, 3.

common perception that the English inevitably defeated the Indians because of their military superiority.”<sup>71</sup> Drake acknowledges the complexity of war and the many factors at play. He generally takes more of a micro stance and focuses on the influential power of the individual.

Armstrong Starkey, another proponent of human agency, argues that the adoption of aboriginal war tactics by the colonists secured the colonial victory. He writes in *European and Native American Warfare: 1675-1815*, that King Philip's War was “the first major war in which the Indians matched their European opponents in firearms.”<sup>72</sup> Mather acknowledged this as well.<sup>73</sup> Since European military institutions proved to be “insufficiently flexible to meet the challenges of the frontier,”<sup>74</sup> some European commanders “incorporated Indian allies into their forces and adopted to the Indian way of war.”<sup>75</sup> Again, this reflects an older argument made by Apess.<sup>76</sup> Coupled with the colonists' advantages in material resources supplied by England- which could sustain prolonged fighting- the English colonists secured the victory in King Philip's War.<sup>77</sup>

Malone, on the other hand, argues for the inevitability of the conflict, which reflects Thomas Church's seventeenth-century argument. But Malone asserts inevitability was not the work of God, as Church maintained. In *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians*, Malone writes:

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Armstrong Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare: 1675-1815* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 14.

<sup>73</sup> Mather, 10.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Apess, 38.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

The ultimate defeat of the hostile tribes was inevitable long before the death of the man whom the English called King Philip. The Indians' tactical successes and their skillful use of European military technology were not enough to win a war against the far more numerous colonists, whose Indian allies, fortified garrison houses, and almost unlimited logistical support tipped the scales heavily.<sup>78</sup>

Malone considers Indian military tactics and the skillful adoption of European weapons by the aboriginal inhabitants as micro factors; products of human choice. Though beneficial for the Native Americans, Malone argues that these factors were not enough to secure an Indian victory when faced with higher numbers of English soldiers and their allies and the support of England. But Malone is not a complete proponent of inevitability in determining the outcome of the war. He acknowledges that human agency contributed to the colonial victory. Like his contemporaries, and not like the seventeenth-century writers, Malone at least considers and acknowledges the multiple factors that contributed to the colonial victory. In outlining the importance of individual choices-especially the choices of military leaders- Malone argues that the Native Americans were far superior in forest combat until the English “made good use of their Indian allies and began to adopt some Indian tactics.”<sup>79</sup> Douglas Edward Leach wrote what was widely considered in the mid-twentieth century, and still is by some today, the standard history of the war. In *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War*, Leach also pushes the theme of inevitability. He argues that from the day when the first English settlers arrived in New England and built permanent homes, “King Philip's War became virtually

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<sup>78</sup> Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1991), 94.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

inevitable;” two incompatible ways of life confronted each other and only one could prevail.<sup>80</sup>

War generates acts of narration, and this narration can take the form of oral traditions or written traditions. Jill Lepore argues that war is, at least in part, a contest for meaning, and the colonial victory ensured that their version of events, documented with pen and paper, would eclipse the Native American version of events, expressed through oral communication.<sup>81</sup> Tribal networks that regulated oral transmission of knowledge were challenged or snuffed by “Rhode Island legal strictures and dispersions that disrupted the community’s ability to collectively speak or recount; and the loss of elders, reservoirs and caretakers of cultural knowledge, would have been specially devastating to these practices.”<sup>82</sup> Local regulations strictly bound the surviving Native Americans following King Philip’s War to such an extent that “a concerted Narragansett history of the war did not emerge in the postbellum period, akin to the detailed accountings of Increase Mather (1676) or William Hubbard (1677).”<sup>83</sup>

Lepore holds the power of the written word in high esteem. She ponders how an illiterate group of people could possibly prevail over those who possess the power to transcribe: “If war is, at least in part, a contest for meaning, can it ever be a fair fight when only one side has access to those perfect instruments of empire, pens, paper, and printing presses?”<sup>84</sup> Lepore gives ample credit to the power of the pen in securing

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<sup>80</sup> Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip’s War* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 1.

<sup>81</sup> Lepore, xxi.

<sup>82</sup> DeLucia, 980.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Lepore, xxi.

military victories and so, like Drake, subscribes to the argument that acute factors are largely influential in the determination of victors. Lepore, like other contemporary writers of the war, acknowledges other influential factors in the colonial victory; she recognizes the importance of England's support for the colonists and she points to the use of Indian allies as influential sources that contributed to the colonial victory.

Nathaniel Philbrick outlines many factors that contributed to the colonial victory. In *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War*, Philbrick does not argue for the inevitability of the conflict but allots credit to human agency and individual choices, especially the choices of military leaders. He writes: "War came to New England because two leaders-Philip and his English counterpart, Josiah Winslow- allowed it to happen."<sup>85</sup> Along with strong leaders, Philbrick argues the colonial victory was aided by the ability of the colonists to outlast the Native Americans; though the colonists had suffered a series of devastating defeats, they could rely on England to fortify their supplies of food, muskets and ammunition. Philbrick identifies multiple explanations for the colonial victory; it depended on the choices of military leaders as well as the promise of material replenishment from England. He acknowledges the nuances of the war's actors and the events of the war. He writes: "I soon learned that the real-life Indians and English of the seventeenth century were too smart, too generous, too greedy, too brave- in short, too human- to behave so predictably."<sup>86</sup> Philbrick seemingly comes across a similar explanation in his analysis of King Philip's War.

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<sup>85</sup> Nathaniel Philbrick, *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War* (New York: Viking, 2006), xvi.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

This thesis is unique because it combines historical, archaeological and cultural landscape information to analyze the final and fatal attack on King Philip. The scholarship that began at the end of the war and continued to the present was critically evaluated. Archaeological site reconstruction was undertaken to understand the physical and cultural landscape depicting Philip's death site. Modern statues and plaques that commemorate the war were investigated and evaluated. All of this research synthesizes to create a more holistic and complete understanding of the war and the specific event that essentially ended it.

## CHAPTER 3

### CULTURAL COMPARISON OF WEAPONS AND WAR TACTICS

#### **Weapons and War: English**

Early explorers and settlers brought with them to New England iron weapons: guns and knives; the majority of firearms carried by those who made landfall in 1621 were matchlock muskets. Bows existed in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, but only men of upper classes hunted and such a practice was considered sport.<sup>87</sup> In England, “bows, still common under Queen Elizabeth, soon went out of style as hunting weapons, and firearms did not immediately replace them.”<sup>88</sup> The hunting skills of the colonists paled in comparison to the native inhabitants of New England. It was common practice to hunt with hounds and hawks in England, and let those animals do the killing.<sup>89</sup> European weapons were brought to the New World to protect the colonists from wild animals and aggressors; the weapons were also the means of supplying colonists with food and commodities to send back to England.<sup>90</sup> Because of their importance, the colonists craved the most efficient types and their skill in using the firearms soon outdistanced the Europeans in the Old World.<sup>91</sup>

Simple in operation, a matchlock musket lowered a lighted match, held in a device called a serpentine, into an open pan of priming powder. By pulling a trigger or depressing a lever, the musketeer forced the serpentine to rotate against a restraining spring, and the match dipped into the priming powder. The contact between the match

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<sup>87</sup> Malone, 52.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Harold L. Peterson, “The Military Equipment of Plymouth and Bay Colonies, 1620-1690,” *The New England Quarterly* 20 (June 1947): 197.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

and powder set off an explosive chain starting in the pan, traveling through a touch hole to the propellant charge in the barrel. The projectile, usually a large lead ball weighing a twelfth of a pound, was expelled from the barrel.<sup>92</sup>

The matchlock musket was an effective arm for the large formations characteristic of European armies, but it was cumbersome and weighed up to twenty pounds. It was also a short-range weapon, only accurate within fifty yards of the target, and it had to be fired using a forked rest.<sup>93</sup> Regardless, the weapon was appropriate for European infantry actions in which ranks of musketeers fired concentrated volleys at close ranges.<sup>94</sup> But though the weapon was suited for the battlefields of Europe, it was inappropriate in New England, where forest warfare dominated. In England, military commanders did not worry about ambushes, night attacks, or enemies who took cover behind trees.<sup>95</sup> The matchlock wasn't suited for the New England climate and landscape. Before firing the gun, a matchlock required the musketeer to light his match (a cord treated with saltpeter or gunpowder). Such a process was time consuming, especially since a match typically burned on both ends and had to be adjusted frequently. Also, a match burned at a rate of up to nine inches an hour, and so extra caches of cord had to be carried and kept dry on the field.<sup>96</sup> Matches also produced light and an odor. These side effects were dangerous in forest warfare. A successful ambush required discreetness and convenience, and matchlock muskets could not adequately provide that in New England.

Some professional soldiers and affluent colonists brought with them to the New World more expensive and more advanced firearms. Captain Myles Standish, a military

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<sup>92</sup> Malone, 31-2.

<sup>93</sup> Malone, 32.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 32-3.



leader in Plymouth Colony, brought with him to New England a snaphaunce, which was self-igniting and required no rest to steady it while firing.<sup>97</sup> Realizing that matchlocks were inefficient in forest warfare, military leaders like Myles Standish and John Endicott convinced their colonial governments to purchase flintlocks as common arms.<sup>98</sup> In 1646, Plymouth Colony required each town to maintain in reserve, as public arms, two flintlocks for every thirty men.<sup>99</sup> The advantages of flintlocks were soon realized by the colonists. Malone writes: “the transition to flintlocks was apparently complete in the colony's militia bands years before the outbreak of King Philip's War in 1675. The lessons learned in that devastating struggle prompted Plymouth officials to ban the military use of matchlocks in 1677.”<sup>100</sup> The colonists who fought in King Philip's War were armed almost entirely with flintlocks, though their governments had not yet formalized this transition from matchlocks to flintlocks in law. Massachusetts Bay Colony finally enacted such a law in 1693; Connecticut Colony never did.<sup>101</sup>

Peterson divides the arms of the early settlers into three categories: defensive armor, edged weapons, and projectile weapons. An armed man in the earlier part of 1620-1690 was equipped with at least one article in each category. A corselet, sword and

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<sup>97</sup> Malone, 33-4. In the seventeenth century, all guns that operated by striking flint against steel were called snaphaunces or firelocks. The true snaphaunce, which was rarely used in New England, differs from other flintlocks primarily because the cover to the priming pan is separate from the steel battery against which the flint strikes. In all other types of flintlocks, the battery and pan are forged in one piece, so that the striking action of the cock, in which is clamped a piece of flint, against the battery not only produces sparks but also opens the pan into which the sparks fall. Flintlocks that are not true snaphaunces are slightly more efficient. Other minor differences in the mechanisms of flintlocks have resulted in modern delineations such as English lock and dog lock, which were all used in New England in the seventeenth century.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

musket were the most common.<sup>102</sup> Armor at that time consisted of a corselet, a back and breast plate of hammered iron or steel; protection for the thighs, groin, neck, and a helmet for the head. The Massachusetts Bay Company purchased 60 suits of armor in 1628.<sup>103</sup> Men from the *Mayflower's* first exploratory expedition wore corselets, which proved beneficial. Peterson argues that the armor offset the danger of aboriginal arrows. The bow was a more accurate and more efficient weapon compared to the average colonial musket, but the arrows could not pierce armor so easily.<sup>104</sup> Armor was heavy though, and proved cumbersome since most confrontations played out in forests. Peterson argues: "In time the settlers found that they could dodge the Indian arrows unless taken by surprise; and then later the savages obtained guns, against which armor was of little use. Confronted with this situation, the settlers decided in favor of freer movement."<sup>105</sup> By the time of King Philip's War, the corselet was replaced by heavy leather or quilted coats.<sup>106</sup> Armor had its weaknesses, but it was deemed useful enough to keep in some form for King Philip's War. Peterson writes of seventeenth-century soldiers in Plymouth Colony:

The soldiers wore body armor, which was proof against arrows; and when attacked by small bodies of Indians, they could hold their own. However, their offensive weapons were so inefficient that a vigorous and persistent Indian attack could have wiped out the colony. When the Pequots began such an offensive in 1637, the Indians' chance of success had passed. The settler still wore body armor, but the inefficient matchlock had been partially replaced by a flint arm. The Indian had no armor to stop a bullet and comparatively few serviceable firearms.<sup>107</sup>

It was customary for all soldiers of the early seventeenth century to carry swords and knives. The usual procedure in combat: fire a volley, discard the musket, draw the

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<sup>102</sup> Peterson, 197.

<sup>103</sup> Peterson, 197.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 198-9.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 207-8.

sword and charge.<sup>108</sup> There were common stores of arms for the early settlers but there was no standard equipment; each man supplied his own weaponry, and so there was a decent amount of variation.<sup>109</sup> By the time of King Philip's War, knives and hatchets were preferred by colonists for hand-to-hand combat over the sword.<sup>110</sup> Peterson argues: "these weapons were nearly universally possessed because of their utility in everyday life. There was good precedent for their use in combat."<sup>111</sup> The colonists recognized the practicality of such weapons in the New England landscape, and so adopted these tools that doubled as killing machines. The pike was another edged European weapon brought to the New World by the colonists. For seventeenth-century European armies, pikes played a significant role. The musketeer was only beginning to take shape in Europe when colonists broke off for New England; the settlers of Massachusetts Bay brought with them 60 pikes and 20 half-pikes, nearly as many pikes as muskets.<sup>112</sup> But pikes weren't ideal in the New England country. Averaging 15 feet in length, the long shafts of pikes made them hard to use in forest combat. In Europe, pikes were used on open battlefields, and then primarily to hold ground gained by the soldiers; the pikemen drove the butts of their weapons into the ground to present a fortress of pointed pikes. But, as Peterson points out, Indian fighting didn't involve pitched battles, cavalry or charges, and so pikes were virtually useless.<sup>113</sup> On October 13, 1675, a few months after the outbreak of King Philip's War, the Massachusetts General Court declared all pikemen to furnish

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Peterson, 199. The rapier was the most common piercing weapon for the colonists: a slender, three or four-sided blade intended primarily for thrusting. Even with the popularity of the rapier, there was still variety in the piercing weaponry of early colonists. But the sword, like armor, decreased in popularity after the end of the Pequot War.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 199-200.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

themselves with firearms.<sup>114</sup> From 1630 to 1675, there was a change in firearm use and preference among colonial armies.<sup>115</sup> Listed in inventories and court records, matches are referenced more than flints until the outbreak of the Pequot War in 1636. From then on, tales of snap-shooting increased and records of ambushes indicate that flint arms increased in popularity and use.<sup>116</sup>

The matchlock musket was in many ways inferior to the aboriginal bow; Peterson argues that its chief merit lies in the panic it produced by the flash, smoke, smell and noise of the explosion of the charge.<sup>117</sup> A gun, too, could be loaded with several bullets and wound a number of adversaries with one shot.<sup>118</sup> Firelocks outdistanced matchlocks in forest warfare, though. With firelock muskets, the powder in the priming pan was ignited by striking a piece of flint against a piece of steel called a frizzen. The frizzen was poised directly over the pan so that the sparks produced by the contact of the flint and steel would drop into the pan. The pan had a cover so the powder could be kept dry. Without the need for matches and the pan cover, a flint-functioning firearm could discharge in dampness and even light rain, making it better suited for forest warfare in New England than the matchlock musket.<sup>119</sup> In fact:

With the coming of King Philip's War, the era of the matchlock in America was definitely past. The campaigns of that war, forays into the wilderness, night attacks, ambushes, battles in the rain, and the encounters between individuals which required snap-

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 204. "For the first ten years, the popularity of the matchlock was unchallenged. With the coming of the settlers to Massachusetts Bay in 1630, however, the transition began in earnest." The common arms supply of the Massachusetts Bay Company contained 80 "bastard muskets" with snaphaunces, 10 fowling pieces and 10 matchlock muskets. Although matchlocks were used, flintlock muskets were superior in public arms.

<sup>116</sup> Peterson, 204.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 203.

shooting indicate clearly that the snaphance was the principal weapon.<sup>120</sup>

### **Weapons and War: Indians**

Some archaeologists believe that humans first migrated to the Americas from Asia at least 12,000 to 15,000 years ago.<sup>121</sup> Overtime, the descendants of those people moved south and east.<sup>122</sup> It's believed that the first settlers of Rhode Island were mobile and "their implements, made of stone and bone, were designed for killing and cutting up animals. They were lightweight tools such as spear points, knives, and scrapers."<sup>123</sup> The most easily recognizable objects surviving from this period are fluted points, which are tapered stone spear points.<sup>124</sup> These stones were used by hunters; a point was attached to a wooden spear and thrown or thrust at an animal.<sup>125</sup> To craft the these tools, people carved a groove on both sides of the stone point; that groove was known as the flute, and it allowed the point to be fit into a wooden shaft.<sup>126</sup> Fluted points were made by detaching two long channel-shaped flakes with a tool of bone or antler; a difficult task, the toolmaker likely made several failed attempts before making the perfect groove.<sup>127</sup> One such broken point provides the earliest evidence of people in Rhode Island; it was recovered at the South Wind site near Wickford Cove in North Kingstown; the point was dated to craftsmanship 10,000 years ago.<sup>128</sup> Archaeologists argue that one hallmark of

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>121</sup> Paul Robinson et al., *Native American Archaeology in Rhode Island* (Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, 2002), 1.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

Late Woodland and Late Prehistoric cultures was the use of the bow and arrow.<sup>129</sup> This argument is reflected in the archaeological record as “smaller, often triangular projectile points considered diagnostic of the Late Woodland throughout the Eastern Woodlands.”<sup>130</sup> The technological change from spears with large points to bows and arrows with smaller projectile points could be associated with more efficient and intense deer hunting, but it may also be associated with increases in inter-group conflict and warfare.<sup>131</sup> The authors of *Seeking Our Past: An Introduction to North American Archaeology* assert that archaeological evidence for intergroup conflict among people in the Eastern Woodlands, particularly in the Late Prehistoric period, is reflected both in injuries found in burial populations and in the presence of palisaded villages at the time.<sup>132</sup>

The aboriginal bow as a tool for hunting and inter-tribal warfare extended to its use in warfare with the European colonists for most of the seventeenth century, but the aboriginal arsenal was eventually supplemented with guns.<sup>133</sup> The efficiency of a weapon is determined by the strength and accuracy of the weapon itself but also by the skill of the

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<sup>129</sup> Sarah W. Neusius and G. Timothy Gross, “Northern and Coastal Peoples of the Eastern Woodlands,” in *Seeking Our Past: An Introduction to North American Archaeology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 396. The authors define the Late Woodland period in their discussion of bows and arrows as the period between approximately 1500 BP and 950 BP. Their Late Prehistoric period begins at approximately AD 1000 and continues to European contact during the sixteenth century AD.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Malone, 15. The earliest written record detailing the use of bows by native inhabitants dates to 1524. The Sudbury Bow is physical evidence for the use of aboriginal bows in the sixteenth century. Aboriginal bow use most definitely preceded this century, but European sources dated to the early sixteenth century provide the earliest written record for bow use.

person who uses the weapon.<sup>134</sup> The native inhabitants of New England were skilled hunters and efficient at using their bows, which were sturdy and powerful weapons.

According to Leveillee, Waller Jr. and Ingram: “The late pre-contact environment in southern Rhode Island supported a rich and diverse floral and faunal resource base available for human exploitation.”<sup>135</sup> Rhode Island’s salt ponds especially “were dynamic settings in which diverse and abundant plant and animal communities thrive, with eelgrass as a keystone species.”<sup>136</sup> In the excavation of RI 100, a large site distributed over a 72-acre parcel in Narragansett, Rhode Island, archaeologists with The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc., recovered oyster shell, bone fragments, quartz, quartzite, argillite debitage, fire-cracked rock, and argillite tool, Indian pottery sherds and several Late Woodland projectile points.<sup>137</sup> Shellfish were abundant in southern Rhode Island in the late pre-contact period, as well as finfish and migratory and resident bird and waterfowl species.<sup>138</sup> The abundance of fish in the coastal waters was the original reason that Breton, Portuguese, and Bristol fishermen had started to fish in the area in the fifteenth century.<sup>139</sup> After living in New England for four years, civilian William Wood wrote of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and published his observations in 1634's *New England's Prospect*. He wrote of New England in 1634: “there is no country known that yields more variety of fish winter and summer.”<sup>140</sup> Birds like turkey were abundant in the

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<sup>134</sup> Malone, 52. Malone argues “a man and his firearm form a weapons system in which the skill of the man is at least as important as the inherent accuracy of his weapon.”

<sup>135</sup> Alan Leveillee, Joseph Waller Jr. and Donna Ingham, “Dispersed Villages in Late Woodland Period South-Coastal Rhode Island,” *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 34 (2006): 73.

<sup>136</sup> Leveillee et al., 74.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>139</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 22.

<sup>140</sup> William Wood, *New England's Prospect*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), 53.

region and hunted for their meat.<sup>141</sup> Wood wrote: “some (native inhabitants) killed ten or a dozen in half a day. If they can be found towards an evening and watched where they perch, if one come about ten or eleven of the clock, he may shoot...they will sit unless they be slenderly wounded.”<sup>142</sup>

The interior or near-interior freshwater lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands also supported various mammal species like grey squirrels, beavers, river otters, raccoons, red and grey foxes, rabbits and white-tailed deer.<sup>143</sup> The abundance of such animals coupled with the need for protein, skins and furs necessitated the need for weapons that allowed for the killing and processing of these animals. In 1605, James Rosier of England wrote of a voyage to the Maine coast and described the hunt for a whale. Aboriginal bows and arrows were used to kill the animal:

He is 12 fathoms long; and that they go in company of their King with a multitude of their boats, and strike him with a bone made in fashion of a harping iron fastened to a rope, when they make great and strong of the barke of trees, which they veare out after him; then all their boats come about him, and as he riseth above water, with their arrowes they shoot him to death...<sup>144</sup>

Writing in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, Thomas Morton described the deer as “the most usefull and most beneficiall beast” of the region.<sup>145</sup> Deer were numerous enough to supply meat year-round for the native inhabitants of New England.<sup>146</sup> Men used a variety of techniques to hunt: “game might be stalked with bow and arrow by a lone hunter or by groups of two or three hundred men working together.”<sup>147</sup> Giovanni da Verrazano, a Florentine sailor, wrote in 1524 that species such as stags, deer and lynxes

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>143</sup> Leveille et al., 74.

<sup>144</sup> George Parker Winship, *Sailors Narratives of Voyages Along the New England Coast, 1524-1624* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1905), 148-9.

<sup>145</sup> Thomas Morton, *The New English Canaan of Thomas Morton* (Boston: Prince Society, 1883), 199.

<sup>146</sup> Cronon, 24.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 47.



were captured by the native inhabitants with snares and bows: “the latter being their chief implement.”<sup>148</sup> Prey could be tricked, and “run between specially planted hedges more than a mile in length until it was finally driven into the weapons of waiting hunters.”<sup>149</sup> But Cronon warns that simple measures of caloric content tend to undervalue the importance of the fall and winter hunt to an agricultural village's subsistence cycle.<sup>150</sup> Animals were not only sources of food, their skins and furs were also used to clothe and warm the native inhabitants of southern New England. The abundance of animals and the need for protein and clothing necessitated the need for hunting weapons, and hardwood trees were plentiful in the region and sufficient to craft weapons to kill these animals.<sup>151</sup>

Southern New England forests (forests in Connecticut, Rhode Island and the eastern fourth of Massachusetts) were dense with a variety of central hardwoods: black, red and white oaks; chestnut, the hickories, and some hemlock and scattered white pine.<sup>152</sup> According to Leveillee et al.:

...pollen cores from the Pettaquamscutt River in Narragansett indicate the dominant forest circa (ca.) 2000 years B.P. included mixed red oak and white pine with some hickory, birch, túpelo, and beech. Pollen data from North Kingstown indicate that around 1400 B.P. oak remained the dominant forest species followed by alder, mixed with a minimal amount of pine and birch.<sup>153</sup>

Oak and hickory were probably the most common woods used for bows, but many other species of tree supplied sufficient material to craft strong bows.<sup>154</sup> Arrows were made of felsite, quartz or quartzite found in the region.<sup>155</sup> Whether hunting big game or used in combat, the arrowhead was designed “to penetrate deeply, cut severely, and remain

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<sup>148</sup> Winship, 18.

<sup>149</sup> Cronon, 47.

<sup>150</sup> Cronon, 47-8.

<sup>151</sup> Malone, 15.

<sup>152</sup> Cronon, 26.

<sup>153</sup> Leveillee et al., 73.

<sup>154</sup> Otis Tufton Mason, *North American Bows, Arrows, and Quivers* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 644.

<sup>155</sup> Malone, 16.

lodged in the victim. An arrow has little shocking power on impact, but with a sharp head it becomes a deadly, hemorrhage-producing projectile.”<sup>156</sup> Writing in 1605, James Rosier of England wrote of a voyage to the Maine coast, and described the bows of a group of native inhabitants he encountered:

Their bow is made of Wich Hazell, and some of Beech in fashion much like our bowes, but they want nocks, onely a string of leather put through a hole at one end, and made fast with a knot at the other. Their arrowes are made of the same wood, some of Ash, big and long, with three feathers tied on, and nocked very artificially: headed with the long shanke bone of a Deere, made very sharpe with two fangs in manner of a harping iron. They have likewise Darts, headed with like bone, one of which I darted among the rockes, and it brake not. These were use very cunningly, to kill fish, fowle and beasts.<sup>157</sup>

The aboriginal bows were described by Europeans as moderately strong compared to English bows.<sup>158</sup> James Rosier drew an aboriginal witch hazel bow during his voyage along the Maine coast in 1605 and wrote that the bow had the strength to carry the arrow five or six score.<sup>159</sup> Though its capacity to travel a certain distance was limited, the hunter or warrior also determined the bow's success at dealing a devastating blow onto a target.<sup>160</sup> Thomas Lechford observed the accuracy of native inhabitants with their bows and arrows at short ranges, remarking they were “very good at a short mark.”<sup>161</sup>

The devastation wrought by a bow depends, in part, on the distance between the bow holder and the target.<sup>162</sup> Malone notes the weaknesses of bows: he argues that if someone shoots an arrow in a forest, and he is a considerable distance from his target, he

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Winship, 119.

<sup>158</sup> Winship, 119.

<sup>159</sup> Malone, 15.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Lechford, *Plain Dealing or News from New England* (Boston: J.K. Wiggin & WM Parsons Lunt, 1867), 120.

<sup>162</sup> Malone, 18.

risks hitting branches and missing his shot.<sup>163</sup> In a field fight, at a considerable distance from the target, the archer needs to shoot high in the air in order for the arrow to descend on the target. But that slow, overarching flight gives the target time to dodge the arrow.<sup>164</sup> Mason argues that distance, wind, varying elasticity of the bow, varying weight of the arrow, shape of the arrow and penetrability of the game determine the success of the weapon.<sup>165</sup> Mason asserts that “each one of these variables is rendered as constant as possible by the hunter, in skulking, getting to windward, using wood of the greatest strength for bows, and making one's own arrows.”<sup>166</sup> Early colonists testified to the Native Americans' skilled mitigation of these potential hindrances. William Wood wrote: “when they get sight of a deer, moose, or bear, they study how to get the wind of him, and approaching within shot, stab their mark quite through, if the bones hinder not.”<sup>167</sup>

When the aboriginal inhabitants of New England closed with their enemies in combat, they relied on clubs and axes; “a fight that began with exchanges of arrows often ended with a rush by axe- or club-swinging warriors.”<sup>168</sup> Detailing events of the Pequot War in 1637, John Mason wrote of a band of Pequots that charged the Mohegans, allies of the English. As the enemy encroached, the Mohegans did not move “until the other came within thirty or forty Paces of them; then they run and met them,” and struck blows with hatchets and knives.<sup>169</sup> The native inhabitants of southern New England used smooth, grooveless heads of various sizes for their war axes.<sup>170</sup> Warriors carried

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Mason, 647.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Wood, 106.

<sup>168</sup> Malone, 18.

<sup>169</sup> John Mason, *A Brief History of the Pequot War* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), 19.

<sup>170</sup> Malone, 18.

“tomahawks, made of wood like a pole axe, with a sharpened stone fastened therein.”<sup>171</sup>

Early colonists often used the word “tomahawk” to refer to ball-headed wooden clubs, stone hammers, stone axes, or other striking instruments.<sup>172</sup> The tomahawk, a type of stone axe, was made by forcing the tapered end of a smooth stone head through a hole in a solid wood handle; the tool was strong enough to withstand the rigors of combat and could be used for woodcutting as well.<sup>173</sup>

Malone argues that warfare is often limited in its scope and ferocity “by the deliberate restraint of combatants and by the capabilities of their technology.”<sup>174</sup> He asserts that “Indians did undertake prolonged sieges of fortified positions on occasion and would sometimes meet in open fields for battles or skirmishes involving large numbers of warriors. In all these forms of warfare, relatively few participants were ever killed.”<sup>175</sup> Roger Williams noted of Indian wars: “their Warres are farre lesse bloody, and devouring then the cruell Warres of *Europe*; and seldome twenty slaine in a pitch field.”<sup>176</sup> Writing in 1943, Turney-High offers his interpretation of Native American warfare: to achieve the motive, the enemy must be obliterated entirely, and “nonliterate warriors” failed to grasp this.<sup>177</sup> For most Native American tribes, “the objective was often gained by vindicating honor, or slapping someone in the face with a quirt rather than killing him.”<sup>178</sup> Like Malone and Williams, Turney-High subscribes to the argument that Native American warfare was limited; he interprets Native American warfare as small-scale relative to

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<sup>171</sup> Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* (1792), in *Special Collections Publications* (University of Rhode Island), [http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/sc\\_pubs/13](http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/sc_pubs/13), 152.

<sup>172</sup> Malone, 19.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>175</sup> Malone, 7.

<sup>176</sup> Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* (London: Gregory Dexter, 1643), 188.

<sup>177</sup> Harry Holbert Turney-High, *Primitive War: Its Practice and Concepts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1949), 103.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

European warfare. Writing in 1988, Hirsch argues in “The Collision of Military Cultures in Seventeenth-Century New England” that “if waged in the name of retaliation, an Indian war ostensibly ceased when the aggrieved had inflicted retribution.”<sup>179</sup>

Ambushes and raids on villages were much more frequent than actual battles.<sup>180</sup> Turney-High argues that “sociological patterns demanded that the raid and the ambuscade remain the chief types of operations” in Native American warfare; other historians reasoned that personal vendettas or other issues between tribes didn't necessitate organized armies but ambushes or raids with objectives narrow in scope and minimum bloodshed.<sup>181</sup> Malone posits that fire was not a favored weapon used by the Native Americans in their wars, which indicates a reluctance to utterly destroy.<sup>182</sup> He argued that the limited scope of aboriginal warfare—to quell personal vendettas or the like—rendered fire too horrible and deadly to use.<sup>183</sup>

English observers thought this restriction in the numbers of deaths and level of destruction wrought in times of conflict made violent native encounters look like games. William Wood was unimpressed with Native American wars, remarking that “they do not now practice anything in martial feats worth observation.”<sup>184</sup> The most significant war activity the Indians partook in was the building of “forts to fly into” in the case of an enemy ambush.<sup>185</sup> When they engaged in war Wood thought the Native Americans to be unorganized, with no marching, ranks, or files. He remarked: the Native Americans “let

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<sup>179</sup> Adam J. Hirsch, “The Collision of Military Cultures in Seventeenth-Century New England,” *The Journal of American History* 74 (March 1988): 1190.

<sup>180</sup> Malone, 7.

<sup>181</sup> Turney-High, 102.

<sup>182</sup> Malone, 22.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>184</sup> Wood, 102.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

fly their winged shaftments without either fear or wit. Their artillery being spent, he that hath no arms to fight, finds legs to run away.”<sup>186</sup> The colonial observances of aboriginal warfare and analyses of that warfare by historians in the twentieth century reveal a pattern of regarding Indian warfare as small-scale relative to English warfare. Because Indian warfare is evaluated against the backdrop of English warfare, it’s instantly seen as less catastrophic and intense. Fights and deaths among the Indians were surely devastating to those involved, no matter the body count.

The reasons for fighting varied; New England Indians may have fought to gain prestige and power, to demonstrate courage and combat skills, to resist offensive actions, dominate weaker neighbors, to seize tribute, gain hunting territory and fishing rights, to control trade or to avenge real or imagined wrongdoings.<sup>187</sup> James Axtell argues that antagonisms and irritations often feed the fires of war and “the ardent spirits of the greedy, the proud, and the young can never be thoroughly dampened.”<sup>188</sup> Williams noted that mockery between powerful tribal figures “is a great kindling of Warres amongst them.”<sup>189</sup> Daniel Gookin, a Puritan missionary and magistrate of the Massachusetts Colony, wrote in 1674 that the Indians were “very revengeful, and will not be unmindful to take vengeance upon such as have injured them or their kindred.”<sup>190</sup> Malone notes that a disastrous plague hit the coast of New England in 1616 and decimated the aboriginal populations; the disruption of the balance of power, since some tribes were ravaged by

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>187</sup> Malone, 7.

<sup>188</sup> James Axtell, “The Scholastic Philosophy of the Wilderness,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (July 1972): 340.

<sup>189</sup> Williams, 186.

<sup>190</sup> Gookin, 149.

the sickness while others avoided it, may have contributed to increased inter-tribal aggression.<sup>191</sup>

### **Trade and Guns**

The *Mayflower* made landfall at Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1621, but the introduction of European trade items to the Indians in New England had begun before permanent settlement by Europeans.<sup>192</sup> Verrazano was commissioned by Francis I in 1523 to cross the Atlantic in search of a sea route to Catbay. Before entering Newport Harbor, Verrazano wrote of twenty small boats approaching his ship, the Native Americans “came near enough for us to toss to them some little bells and glasses.”<sup>193</sup> He noted that the Native Americans prized the colonial bells, azure crystals and toys; “when we showed them our arms, they expressed no admiration, and only asked how they were made.”<sup>194</sup> Native Americans in Cape Cod took knives, fish hooks, and sharpened steel from Verrazano and his crew.<sup>195</sup> George Waymouth embarked on a voyage to the Maine coast in 1605, commissioned to select a location for a settlement; James Rosier accompanied Waymouth and wrote an account of the voyage. Knives, glasses, combs and “other trifles” were traded with the Native Americans.<sup>196</sup>

The adoption of European guns by the Native Americans had a dramatic effect on their military system.<sup>197</sup> Despite the superior rate of fire of aboriginal bows, Native

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<sup>191</sup> Malone, 27.

<sup>192</sup> Christina B. Johannsen, “European Trade Goods and Wampanoag Culture in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Burr’s Hill, a 17<sup>th</sup> century Wampanoag burial ground in Warren, Rhode Island*, ed. Susan Gibson, Studies in anthropology and material culture (Providence, Rhode Island: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, 1980), 25.

<sup>193</sup> Winship, 14.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>196</sup> Winship, 118.

<sup>197</sup> Malone, 29.

Americans quickly recognized the advantages of muskets both on the hunt and in war.<sup>198</sup> Bullets flew faster than arrows and took a more direct route to the target. Also, the heavy lead projectiles were less likely to deflect off overhanging branches; they were also nearly impossible to dodge and more damaging upon impact.<sup>199</sup> “In sharp contrast to the majority of English colonists, New England Indians chose flintlocks over matchlocks almost immediately,” according to Malone; the aboriginal inhabitants of New England recognized, as early as 1607, the weaknesses in the ignition system of the matchlock musket.<sup>200</sup> Writing in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Gookin observed that as a result of trade with the English, Dutch and French, the native inhabitants of New England “generally disuse their former weapons, and instead thereof have guns, pistols, swords, rapier blades, fastened unto a staff of the length of a half pike, hatchets and axes.”<sup>201</sup> More Native Americans in southern New England began to use firearms in the 1620s. By the beginning of King Philip's War in 1675, most Indian hunters and fighters had flintlock muskets or carbines.<sup>202</sup> The colonial weapons enabled the Native Americans to hunt more efficiently and gather ample furs, which were coveted by the colonists. With the arrival of the colonists and demand for trade items, Native American tribes had more incentives to compete with one another; coupled with flintlocks, opportunities for aggression and domination grew among the Native Americans of New England.<sup>203</sup>

Thomas Morton wrote of Plymouth Colony governor William Bradford's observations of Native Americans and European guns:

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 29, 31.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 33, 35.

<sup>201</sup> Gookin, 152.

<sup>202</sup> Malone, 42.

<sup>203</sup> Malone, 40.



Hearing what gain the French and fishermen made by trading of pieces, powder and shot to the Indians, he, as the head of this consortship, began the practice of the same in these parts. And first he taught them to use them, to charge and discharge, and what proportion of powder to give the piece, according to the size and bigness of the same; and what shot to use for fowl and what for deer. And having thus instructed them, he employed some of them to hunt and fowl for him, so as they became far more active in that employment than any of the English, by reason of their swiftness of foot and nimbleness of body; being also quick sighted, and by continual exercise well knowing the haunts of all sorts of game. So as when they saw the execution that a piece would do, and the benefit that might come by the same, they became mad, as it were, after them, and would not (stick) to give any price they could attain to for them; accounting their bows and arrows but bawbles in comparison of them.<sup>204</sup>

Morton evidences the Native American preference for firearms over aboriginal bows and also their skill in using guns.

### **Tactics**

Tactics in hunting and warfare evolve to accommodate the accuracy of the weapons and the objective of the hunter or warrior; they are also affected by the physical environment and the cultural tendencies of the hunters or warriors. Malone argues that “most colonists in the first three quarters of the seventeenth century thought of warfare in terms of formal battles and single-minded dedication to the destruction of the enemy.”<sup>205</sup> In violent encounters, English colonists wanted the Native Americans to fight in the open; they wanted more military discipline from the Native American enemy. John Mason, chief commander of the Connecticut forces during the Pequot War (1636-1637) was disappointed with the result of a battle between his Mohegan allies and a band of Pequots: one hundred Mohegans descended on sixty Pequots, and struck them with arrows and cut them with hatchets and knives in a way that appeared disorganized and “feeble” to Mason, who remarked “it did hardly deserve the Name of Fighting.”<sup>206</sup> In the

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<sup>204</sup> Morton, 20-1.

<sup>205</sup> Malone, 23.

<sup>206</sup> Mason, *Pequot War*, 19.

aftermath of the Mistick Fight, it is evident by this sentence: “There was at the Foot of the Hill a small Brook, where we rested and refreshed ourselves, having by that time taught them a little more Manners than to disturb us,” that Mason didn't take the enemy seriously.<sup>207</sup>

Malone argues that, although the Native American warriors retained more individual freedom in acts of war than did soldiers in the disciplined ranks of a European army, they still employed tactical plans.<sup>208</sup> (Malone 107) In fact, “their ambushes and raids required a high level of tactical skill and coordination. Just to move a body of men secretly through the forest was a serious military problem,” and fighting in the forest presented challenges only good tactical control could overcome. “Most English observers failed to see the tactical sophistication that often shaped aboriginal military actions. Men who fought apart from their comrades, who hid behind trees and fired at will, seemed by European standards to have no real military skill or tactical order.”<sup>209</sup> Skulking behind trees was to English observers dishonorable but to Indian soldiers a cunning and effective strategy. Native Americans in New England made the terrain and vegetation their allies.<sup>210</sup> Williams observed that when the Narragansetts fought in the woods “every Tree is a Bucklar.”<sup>211</sup>

Mobility was critical in Native American warfare, and rapid travel can be considered an offensive action that, like fire, is meant to shock the enemy.<sup>212</sup> Turney-High argues “fire, mobility, and shock imply aggression, the great principle of the

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>208</sup> Malone, 107.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Williams, 188.

<sup>212</sup> Malone, 11; Turney-High, 99.

offensive.”<sup>213</sup> Offensive actions were generally well observed in the New World, and the Native Americans preferred “close-up shock work,” enlisting the use of clubs and axes to administer crushing blows.<sup>214</sup> Offensive actions for the native inhabitants of New England usually took the form of ambushes. Armor was uncommon for Native Americans in warfare, likely due to the nature of their wars; it was heavy and hindered mobility in the execution of an ambush. Armor was largely shunned by Native Americans because of the weight and impracticality of such a device in ambushes and raids, which required swiftness.

To not only stay mobile but to move stealthily and quickly required technological aids for the New England environment. Moccasins, manufactured from deer or moose, were light-weight, comfortable and quiet in the forest. When winter snows cloaked the region, Native Americans strapped snowshoes to their feet and moved freely over deep drifts to reach game or enemies.<sup>215</sup> The ambush was not a simple military operation; factors other than footwear, which proved a burden onto itself, had to be weighed before executing the military feat. Malone writes:

When the Indians set an ambush, they tried to pick a location where they could achieve complete surprise and hold their opponents long enough to inflict casualties or take prisoners. The choice of terrain was very important, for natural features like cliffs, rivers, or lakes could block a route of escape and make it easier to pin the victims in a vulnerable position. If there were no obstacles on at least one side of the location, the Indians would usually try to close a circle around the enemy at the moment of attack. The ambush position also had to offer good concealment for the attacking force; catching your opponents unaware was the key to success.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Turney-High, 99.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>215</sup> Malone, 11; Axtell, 347.

<sup>216</sup> Malone, 21.

Ambushes and raids were timed to catch opponents off guard and cause confusion; “attacks in darkness, at first light, and during storms or conditions of heavy fog gave the raiders a better chance of success.”<sup>217</sup>

In May 1637, Captain John Mason commanded ninety men enlisted by the Connecticut Colony to march against the Pequots. In his account of the war, written years later, Mason explains why a certain route to reach the enemy was chosen: “Their Numbers far exceeded ours; having sixteen Guns with Powder and Shot, as we were informed by the two Captives.”<sup>218</sup> Out-gunned, the colonial army adopted a Native American way of war and opted for an ambush. Mason wrote: “By Narragansett we should come upon their Backs and possibly might surprise them unaware...which proved very successful.”<sup>219</sup> When they believed they drew near, Mason and his council convened; “And being informed by the Indians (allies) that the Enemy had two Forts almost impregnable; but we were not at all Discouraged, but rather Animated, in so much that we were resolved to Assault both their Forts at once.”<sup>220</sup> Mason implies that he and his men were giddy with the thought of more destruction and bloodshed. A preference for total warfare, the prospect of burning two forts rather than one excited Mason. The place of the fort being Mistick, the fight came to be known as the Mistick Fight, and approximately 500 Native American men, women and children were slaughtered by the colonial army. With the ambush, “the Mischief they intended to us, came upon their own Pate: They were taken in their own Snare.”<sup>221</sup> With such language as “taken in their own Snare,” Mason implies the tactic used, an ambush, which secured the colonial victory,

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<sup>217</sup> Malone, 22.

<sup>218</sup> Mason, *Pequot War*, 2.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

was originally a Native American offensive method. Mason smugly suggests that he learned and he learned well; he gave the enemy a deadly dose of their own medicine. Mason and his men fought like Indians, and they won.

Mason described one ambush during the Pequot War: "...some of them lay in Ambush behind Rocks and Trees, often shooting at us, yet through Mercy touched not one of us."<sup>222</sup> As a protective and counteractive measure, Mason's army, as they approached any swamp or thicket, shot into the passage to reveal any potential skulkers. He wrote that "some of them fell with our Shot; and probably more might, but for want of Munition."<sup>223</sup> Ammunition was limited, but even so colonists used it to clear passages, not aiming for specific targets but simply firing and hoping for the best. Such a tactic demonstrates the colonial recognition of the lethal potential of forest concealment and the great potential for an enemy ambush. The colonists must have felt confident in firing their limited ammunition that it would likely not be wasted; there were skulkers where they shot.

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<sup>222</sup> Mason, *Pequot War*, 11.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

## Chapter 4

### ARCHAEOLOGY

Orser and Fagan define modern archaeology as “the systematic study of humanity in the past.”<sup>224</sup> Archaeologists and historians often divide the span of human existence into prehistoric (before written documents and archives) and historic (that portion of human history that begins with written records) times.<sup>225</sup> Historical archaeology is the archaeological study of people documented in recent history, and so is the type of archaeology used when dealing with Rhode Island sites dated to the years of European colonization.<sup>226</sup> Orser and Fagan argue that archaeology “is as much a part of the study of history as the historic building, crumbed document, or government archive.”<sup>227</sup> Neusius and Gross assert that the most important point underscored by the archaeology of the Protohistoric period “is that the socio-cultural systems into which Europeans were beginning to interject themselves were dynamic systems in their own right.”<sup>228</sup> It’s important to regard the Indian people and their belongings that were recovered via archaeological excavations not as passive recipients to European colonizers but complex people enmeshed in “economic, social, and political interactions.”<sup>229</sup>

Archaeological excavations are typically sensitive undertakings, especially when they involve human remains. In a 2003 article, Paul Robinson and John Brown wrote: “on the issue of who controls the practice of archaeology in Rhode Island, the SHPO

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<sup>224</sup> Charles E. Orser, Jr. and Brian M. Fagan, *Historical Archaeology* (Harper Collins College Publishers, 1995), 4.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>228</sup> Neusius and Gross, 405.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

[State Historic Preservation Office aka The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission] and the NITHPO [Narragansett Indian Tribal Historic Preservation Office] sharply disagree with each other.”<sup>230</sup> Archaeologists and Native American tribes collaborated successfully with the excavation in the 1970s of RI 1000, but disagreed on some details that were published in the RIHPHC book *Native American Archaeology*.<sup>231</sup> In August 2017, the Pokanoket Tribe occupied Brown University property in Bristol; the tribe established an encampment on a part of the 375-acre property near the Heffenreffer Museum collections center. During a peaceful demonstration in Providence on September of that year, the tribe explained to a Providence Journal reporter the property was “sacred ground” (believed to be a gathering place of Philip and his followers) and claimed a right to the land along with other Native American groups, including the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Assonet Band of the Wampanoag Nation, the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, the Pocasset Wampanoag Tribe and the Narragansett Indian Tribe.<sup>232</sup> Brown and the Pokanoket Tribe eventually reached an agreement, which they officiated on September 21, 2017. The agreement outlined a plan for Brown to transfer a portion of its Bristol property into a preservation trust to ensure the conservation of the land and sustainable access by Native American tribes in the region.<sup>233</sup> The Pokanoket ended their encampment on September 25, 2017. The ramifications of King Philip’s War

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<sup>230</sup> John B. Brown III and Paul A. Robinson, “‘The 368 Years’ War’: The Conditions of Discourse in Narragansett County,” In *Cross-Cultural Collaboration: Native Peoples and Archaeology in the Northeastern United States*, ed. Jordan E. Kerber (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2006), 62.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Alex Kuffner, “Pokanoket Tribe marches to Brown University to call attention to land dispute,” Providence Journal, Sept. 5, 2017, <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20170905/pokanoket-tribe-marches-to-brown-university-to-call-attention-to-land-dispute>.

<sup>233</sup> “Brown, Pokanoket agree on plan for preservation and inclusive tribal access to Bristol land,” Brown University, Sept. 25, 2017, <https://news.brown.edu/articles/2017/09/agreement>.

reverberate today in land disputes and disagreement over archaeological sites and materials. It's important to appreciate the complex human issues at stake behind scientific evaluations.

This chapter demonstrates archaeology's strength in yielding physical evidence for Indian adoption of colonial firearms. The focus will be on a Wampanoag burial ground dated to the seventeenth century in Warren, Rhode Island. The next section will focus on the archaeology of the site where King Philip was allegedly killed by a soldier under the direction of Benjamin Church.

### **Physical Setting**

Bristol, Rhode Island is twenty-one square miles in area and located in Bristol County on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay. Bristol is sixteen miles southeast of Providence and seventeen miles north of Newport. It is bordered on the north by the town of Warren.<sup>234</sup> Most of Bristol's boundary is water. Narragansett Bay forms the western boundary while Mount Hope Bay and the Kickemuit River form the eastern boundary. Bristol occupies two promontories and is shaped roughly like a lobster claw; Poppasquash Neck extends like the smaller digit from the western side of Bristol Neck. Bristol Harbor is set between the two peninsulas.<sup>235</sup>

Bristol's topography is the result of the retreat of the last great glacier, which reached as far south as Block Island about eighteen thousand years ago. As the glacier melted, the sea level rose and water flooded inland, creating the irregular and indented coastline of Narragansett Bay. In general, Bristol's land is low-lying and vulnerable to

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<sup>234</sup> Elizabeth Sargent Warren and Pamela A. Kennedy, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Bristol, Rhode Island* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1990), 1.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.



floods, but on the southeast shore of Bristol Neck, Mount Hope rises 221 feet to form the high point on Mount Hope Bay. Mount Hope has a large outcrop of granite gneiss on its west escarpment and a white quartz outcrop on the east, known as King Philip's Chair.<sup>236</sup>

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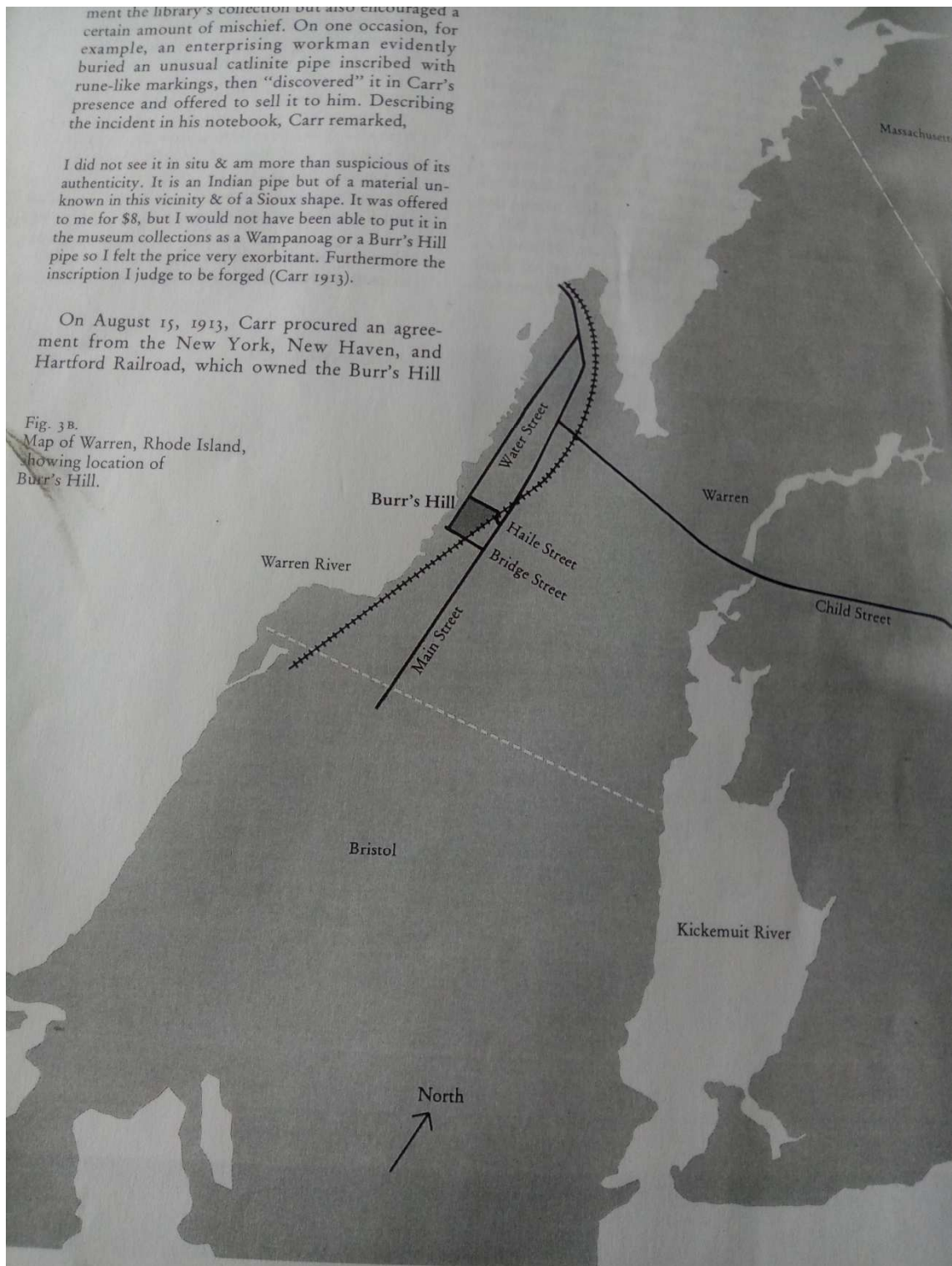
<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

ment the library's collection but also encouraged a certain amount of mischief. On one occasion, for example, an enterprising workman evidently buried an unusual catlinite pipe inscribed with rune-like markings, then "discovered" it in Carr's presence and offered to sell it to him. Describing the incident in his notebook, Carr remarked,

I did not see it in situ & am more than suspicious of its authenticity. It is an Indian pipe but of a material unknown in this vicinity & of a Sioux shape. It was offered to me for \$8, but I would not have been able to put it in the museum collections as a Wampanoag or a Burr's Hill pipe so I felt the price very exorbitant. Furthermore the inscription I judge to be forged (Carr 1913).

On August 15, 1913, Carr procured an agreement from the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad, which owned the Burr's Hill

Fig. 3B.  
Map of Warren, Rhode Island,  
showing location of  
Burr's Hill.



Map of Warren, Rhode Island, showing location of Burr's Hill.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>237</sup> From Susan Gibson, *Burr's Hill, a seventeenth century Wampanoag burial ground in Warren, Rhode Island*, Studies in anthropology and material culture (Providence, Rhode Island: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, 1980).

## Archaeology of Burr's Hill

Archaeological evidence provides physical evidence that Native Americans adopted European weapons. Burr's Hill, a natural gravel bank overlooking the eastern shore of the Warren River in Warren, Rhode Island, is the site of a Wampanoag burial ground. Before 1873, when the boundary between the towns of Warren and Bristol was moved, Burr's Hill had been situated at the northern end of Bristol.<sup>238</sup> Bristol occupies Mount Hope Neck, where Philip allegedly made his headquarters.<sup>239</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1913, 42 burials along with their associated grave goods were unearthed at Burr's Hill.<sup>240</sup> Compared with other Northeastern contact period burial grounds, the Burr's Hill site was comparatively rich in terms of the quantity of material remains recovered.<sup>241</sup> Most of the surviving objects from the Burr's Hill site can be reliably dated to the third quarter of the seventeenth century, which would place it in the appropriate time frame for this study.<sup>242</sup>

Adoption of European material culture including weaponry is reflected in the material from Burr's Hill.<sup>243</sup> In fact, “the overwhelming majority of the objects found in the graves at Burr's Hill are either European imports or were made with European tools or materials.”<sup>244</sup> Though it is important to remember that “the proportion of European to aboriginal objects found in the graves at Burr's Hill may not reflect their relative proportions in daily use,” the weapons interred with the dead still show a mesh of

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<sup>238</sup> Gibson, 9.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 23.

cultures and handling of European materials by the Native Americans, specifically the Wampanoags.<sup>245</sup> The archaeological evidence coupled with historic evidence helps us understand the use of European weapons by Native Americans during King Philip's War.



Burr's Hill, February 2018. Photo: Laura Damon.

Burr's Hill itself was purchased by the town of Warren in 1921 and made into a public park.<sup>246</sup> According to local tradition, Warren was the site of Sowams, the principal village of the Wampanoag sachem Ousamequin, known to the Pilgrims as Massasoit.<sup>247</sup> The human remains recovered from Burr's Hill were likely Wampanoags based on the location of the burial ground and the date of the artifacts associated with the remains. The human remains at Burr's Hill were disinterred repeatedly throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through various construction projects. The construction of the Providence, Warren, and Bristol Railroad, which opened

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<sup>245</sup> Gibson, 23.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>247</sup> Gibson, 9.

in 1851, caused some disturbance to the site.<sup>248</sup> In the spring of 1913, gravel-mining operations again intruded into the burial ground. Charles Read Carr, a local resident and librarian at the George Hail Free Library in Warren, undertook the first and only systematic archaeological excavations ever conducted at the site.<sup>249</sup> Carr wanted to assemble materials for an ethnological exhibit at the library, but he kept records of the excavation process.<sup>250</sup> He recruited friends and other laymen to dig. Human remains were discovered along with wampum and stone tools, and Carr surmised the site was a Wampanoag burial ground.<sup>251</sup> Carr attempted to preserve a piece of Indian history; he excavated so artifacts could be recovered before full damage was done. But Carr wasn't entirely sensitive or careful in his work.<sup>252</sup> According to the RIHPHC publication *Native American Archaeology in Rhode Island* "the matter-of-fact, casual attitude toward both the unintentional (mining) and intentional (Carr's attempts at archaeology) removal of burials contrasts with the preference of many people today to leave graves undisturbed."<sup>253</sup>

On August 15, 1913, Carr procured an agreement from the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad, which owned the Burr's Hill tract. The agreement stipulated that any artifacts found there would become the property of the George Hail Free Library.<sup>254</sup> At the time of publication, Gibson wrote that the Burr's Hill collection was divided principally between the George Hail Free Library in Warren, the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology in Bristol, and the Museum of the American

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Carr, for example, gives a graphic description of some recovered skulls.

<sup>253</sup> Robinson et al., 56.

<sup>254</sup> Gibson, 11-12.

Indian Heye Foundation in New York. Some items were also scattered among museums and private collections.<sup>255</sup> In May 2017, the Wampanoag Tribe reclaimed the Burr's Hill artifacts from the Heffenreffer Museum and George Hail Free Library and reinterred them at Burr's Hill, according to a personal conversation with Patricia Redfearn, director of the George Hail Free Library.

For many of the 42 burials unearthed at Burr's Hill in the spring and summer of 1913, the bones had almost entirely disintegrated, but in some they were preserved well enough that grave placement attributes could be discerned.<sup>256</sup> Most of the individuals had been buried in the typical manner of the Native Americans of southern New England of the Late Woodland and Early Historic periods: with the body flexed and knees drawn to the chest.<sup>257</sup> Many individuals had been wrapped in matting, blankets or bark boards.<sup>258</sup> A number of graves contained traces of powdered red ocher pigment, an important element of mortuary ceremonialism over much of eastern North America from Late Archaic times to the historic period.<sup>259</sup>

At least two individuals at Burr's Hill were buried in the European style, with legs extended. There were no extended burials at the comparable Native American West Ferry site in Jamestown, Rhode Island (c. 1610-1660). Nor were there extended burials at RI 1000, the site of a Narragansett cemetery in North Kingstown (c. 1650-1670s).<sup>260</sup> But at the slightly later (c. 1660-1730) Pantiago site in East Hampton, Long Island, nearly half

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Patricia Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings: An Archaeology of Roger Williams and the Narragansett Indians* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 133.

of the recorded burials (17 of 38) were extended.<sup>261</sup> This shift in body orientation for the dead reflects an adoption of European customs and Christian religion. Native Americans still incorporated elements of their aboriginal culture, though. At Burr's Hill, those who were buried with extended legs faced the same direction as the flexed dead, generally, with heads in a southerly direction. Gibson argues: "rather than signaling the rejection of native burial customs, the extended body posture seems to have been incorporated into the traditional mortuary complex, in much the same manner that European trade wares were."<sup>262</sup> The high number of multiple interments- at least 10 out of 42 at Burr's Hill- compared to one each at the West Ferry and Pantiago sites (sites of comparable size) may be attributable to a smallpox epidemic, especially coupled with the evidence of postules recorded on one preserved skull.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Gibson, 13.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

*Glass pharmaceutical bottle base*  
Base fragment of blue/green thin glass bottle; conical  
kick-up  
Length 5.5 cm Width 3.5 cm  
MAI 8/5300

*Glass bottle base*  
Base fragment of small, green glass bottle; slight  
kick-up; sand pontil mark  
Length 6.5 cm Width 6.2 cm  
HMA 77-240

*Bird bottle fragments*  
Fragments of very thin, dark green glass bottle in shape  
of bird  
Diameter of body approximately 7.5 cm Length  
approximately 12 cm Height approximately 5.5 cm  
MAI 8/5304

#### FIREARMS

*Matchlock plate with serpentine*  
Length of plate 24.5 cm  
MAI 8/5128

*Flintlock*  
Length of plate 16.1 cm  
MAI 8/5126

Fig. 124.  
Lockplate of unidentified type. GHFL.



*Lockplate (unidentified type)*  
Incomplete and rusted; only mainspring and frizzen  
spring visible  
Length of plate 16.7 cm  
GHFL

*Brass pistol barrel*  
Length 18.2 cm Diameter of barrel at muzzle 1.6 cm  
Diameter of barrel at breech 2 cm  
Bore diameter at muzzle 1 cm  
MAI 8/5163

*Half of lead shot mold*  
Length 18 cm Width 3 cm Thickness .65 cm  
Diameter of holes .875 cm  
MAI 8/5154

*Lead shot mold*  
Two halves partially opened  
Length 5.5 cm Width 1.85 cm  
MAI 8/5132

Fig. 125.  
Gun barrel. GHFL 356.



*Gun barrel*  
Tang at breech end; back-sight on top of barrel  
Length 1 m Diameter at muzzle end 2 cm  
Diameter at breech end Bore diameter 1.5 cm  
GHFL 356

*Gun barrel fragment*  
Length 14.5 cm Diameter 2.5 cm Bore diameter  
1.8 cm  
GHFL 337

*Gun barrel fragment*  
Length 13.0 cm Diameter 2.4 cm Bore diameter  
1.8 cm  
GHFL

#### Gunflints

*Blade gunflint*  
Single edge; round heel; single trapezoidal ridge on top  
face; long retouches on all areas of sides, bulb on face  
opposite side retouches blond color; no wear  
Length .25 cm Width .26 cm Thickness .06 cm  
MAI 8/5243

*Blade gunflint*  
Single edge; round heel; single trapezoidal ridge on top  
face; few small retouches on sides; demi-cone of  
percussion (ear) on one side; no bulb; blond color;  
no wear  
Length 2.5 cm Width 2.7 cm Thickness .06 cm  
MAI 8/5243

*Blade gunflint*  
Single edge; single triangular ridge on top face; long  
retouches on all areas of sides; no bulb; blond color;  
no wear  
Length 2.6 cm Width 2.5 cm Thickness 1.2 cm  
MAI 8/5243

*Blade gunflint*  
Single edge; square heel; two trapezoidal ridges on top  
face; few small retouches on sides; demi-cone of  
percussion (ear) on one side; no bulb; black color; no  
wear  
Length 2.2 cm Width 3.1 cm Thickness .8 cm  
MAI 8/5243

*Blade gunflint*  
Double edge; two trapezoidal ridges on top face; few  
small retouches on sides; crushed demi-cone (lip) on one  
side; ear on one side; no bulb; black color; much wear  
on one edge  
Length 2.4 cm Thickness .9 cm  
MAI 8/5243

<sup>264</sup> Gibson, 135.



*Blade gunflint*

Single edge; round heel; single trapezoidal ridge on top face; few small retouches on sides; lip on one side; ear on one side; bulb without erraillure on face opposite side retouches; light brown color; no wear

Length 3.2 cm Width 3.1 cm Thickness .8 cm  
GHFL 172

*Blade gunflint*

Single edge; round heel; single trapezoidal ridge on top face; few small retouches on sides; lip on one side; bulb without erraillure on face opposite side retouches; blond color; no wear

Length 3.0 cm Width 2.7 cm Thickness .7 cm  
GHFL 172

*Blade gunflint*

Single edge; round heel; single trapezoidal ridge on top face; no bulb; blond color; no wear

Length 2.6 cm Width 2.9 cm Thickness .8 cm  
GHFL 172

*9 Lead balls*

Diameter .9 cm  
HMA 77-238a-i

*Lead ball*

Diameter 1.1 cm  
HMA 77-238j

*5 Lead balls*

Diameter .9 cm  
GHFL

*33 Lead balls*

Diameter .9 cm  
MAI 8/5248

*5 Lead balls*

Diameter 1.3 cm  
MAI 8/5247

SPOONS

*Spoon bowl*

Oval; sheet brass; flat stela with small, pointed

*Spoon*

Latten; "seal and baluster" ("long bowl marked with circle enclosing hexagonal stela surmounted by four-faced flowered baluster, sir melon-shaped knob below seal Length 15 cm Length of bowl 5 cm  
GHFL 4

*Spoon*

Latten with tin wash; "seal and fig-shaped bowl marked with rose; rounded hexagonal stela annulus and melon-shaped knob fabric adhering to back of bowl Length 17 cm Length of bowl 5.1 cm  
GHFL 5

*Spoon bowl*

Sheet brass; oval bowl with handle Length 6.7 cm Width 4.5 cm  
HMA 1/452

*Spoon fragment*

Sheet brass; portion of bowl with handle with pointed projection with bowl; wood grain Length 8.1 cm Width 4.5 cm  
HMA 1/458

*Spoon*

Latten with tin wash; "seal and fig-shaped bowl marked with rose; flattened hexagonal stela annulus and melon-shaped knob Length 15 cm Length of bowl 4.8 cm  
HMA 77-283

*Spoon*

Latten with tin wash; "seal and fig-shaped bowl marked with arrow-pierced heart double annulus, for stela annulus, and melon-shaped knob incised cipher "M" Length 16.2 cm Length of bowl 5.1 cm

Firearm and firearm-related inventory of Burr's Hill.<sup>265</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Gibson, 136.

In his analysis of Burr's Hill firearms, Jean-Francois Blanchette dates the Burr's Hill flintlock to the mid-seventeenth century; the blade gunflints (of which there are eight in the Burr's Hill collection) were first produced in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>266</sup> Not all burial offerings are dated to this period, however. The earliest European trade objects in the Burr's Hill collection date to the early seventeenth century, or possibly the late sixteenth century. Blanchette dates the matchlock to the end of the sixteenth century or beginning of the seventeenth.<sup>267</sup> Since the great bulk of the collection dates from the mid-century or later, it is perhaps more plausible to suppose that these earlier objects are items which had been in use some time before being interred or heirlooms passed down from a previous generation.<sup>268</sup> Nonetheless, Gibson posits:

The manufacturing dates of the surviving objects from Burr's Hill suggest that most of the burials were made during King Philip's sachemship, probably during the quarter century or less preceding King Philip's War (1675/6) and possibly during the war. The location of the cemetery south of the original Warren boundary may well be more than a coincidence, for while Warren was settled by Englishmen as early as 1667, Bristol was reserved for the Wampanoag until 1680.<sup>269</sup>

The only purely aboriginal materials from the graves excavated in 1913 were four stone pestles, one clay pot, one wooden spoon fragment, a bone implement, one arrowhead and numerous matting fragments.<sup>270</sup> Although the majority of the objects found in the graves at Burr's Hill were either European imports or made with European tools or materials, the

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<sup>266</sup> Jean-Francois Blanchette, "Firearms," in *Burr's Hill, a seventeenth century Wampanoag burial ground in Warren, Rhode Island*, ed. Susan Gibson, Studies in anthropology and material culture (Providence, Rhode Island: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, 1980), 67-71.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Blanchette, 67-71. It should also be noted that there are several items in the Burr's Hill collection which post-date 1675. The glass beads, for example, are of types dated as late as 1710-1745. And although blade gunflints were manufactured as early as the mid-seventeenth century, they became much more common around the beginning of the eighteenth century.

<sup>269</sup> Gibson, 13.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 23.

tasks they were put to and their forms more closely conformed to Wampanoag than to European cultural patterns.<sup>271</sup> In some cases, imported goods simply replaced functionally similar items in the aboriginal material culture. For example, steel hoes, axes and knives substituted for shell, wood, bone or stone tools.<sup>272</sup>

Gibson argues the abundance of materials at Burr's Hill is its most striking feature.<sup>273</sup> The Burr's Hill site is slightly smaller than the West Ferry site in terms of total number of interments, and it's comparable to the Pantiago site on Long Island, but Burr's Hill exceeded both in sheer quantity of grave goods.<sup>274</sup> The material collection is now fragmented (some materials were reinterred and some are in personal collections) so it is difficult to compare absolute numbers of artifacts from the three sites, but Gibson posits Burr's Hill yielded nearly three times as many objects as West Ferry and more than four times as many as Pantiago.<sup>275</sup>

Carr recorded that 36 of the 42 interments contained some burial offerings.<sup>276</sup> Why was the Burr's Hill site comparatively rich? It may be due to the strategic position occupied by this group of Wampanoag; it was a location within the vicinity of Philip's headquarters at Mount Hope. Gibson posits: "living in or near the principal village of the chief sachem, the Wampanoag group which utilized the Burr's Hill cemetery undoubtedly would have had greater access to European trade wares than would peripherally situated groups."<sup>277</sup> Greater accessibility may bias the study of this particular cemetery; a cemetery will naturally yield more grave goods if those goods were more plentiful for the

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>274</sup> Gibson, 14.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 13.

people in life. There the significance is attached not only to the quantity of material remains but also to the very act of interring goods with the dead. Seventeenth century chroniclers reported that grave goods were placed in the graves of the aboriginal people of New England to meet the needs of the dead in the afterlife.<sup>278</sup>

Jean-Francois Blanchette notes that the Wampanoag were selective in their adoption of European guns; they favored the flintlock over the matchlock, and “this selectivity in the choice of firearms should be reflected in the archaeological record.”<sup>279</sup> Thus, matchlocks and wheellocks should be absent from aboriginal sites and flintlocks should be found in sites dated after 1630 or 1640.<sup>280</sup> Particularly noteworthy, though, is that a matchlock plate with serpentine was recovered from the Burr's Hill site. Blanchette argues that this does not necessarily contradict the generalization that matchlocks were not widely used by the native inhabitants of North America, “for it must be understood that artifacts found in burial sites are offerings to the dead and do not necessarily represent objects actually used by living Indians.”<sup>281</sup> In fact, burial sites often contain broken tools or utensils, special artifacts to be used strictly by the deceased and/or surplus materials.<sup>282</sup> The matchlock from Burr's Hill may have been a broken and useless object that was deemed suitable for burial; the serpentine was set facing away from the plate and was therefore useless.<sup>283</sup>

The European firearms and related artifacts recovered from Burr's Hill included: one matchlock, one possible doglock plate, one lockplate from an unknown firing

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>279</sup> Blanchette, 67.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Blanchette, 67.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

mechanism, one pistol barrel, one gun barrel, parts of another gun barrel, eight gunflints, two lead shot molds and numerous lead shot.<sup>284</sup> To ignite a flintlock, gunflints were necessary. Held between the jaws of the cock, the pulling of the trigger projected the flint against a steel plate known as the battery; the impact of the flint against the steel was so great that it caused particles from the steel plate to become detached, ignite, and fall into the pan which contained the powder.<sup>285</sup> There are bifacial gunflints and spall gunflints; bifacial gunflints achieve their form thanks to a percussion chipping manufacture.<sup>286</sup> Spall gunflint was made from a flake that detached from a pebble and was rounded off by small re-touches on the thickest sides.<sup>287</sup> When ready-made gunflints couldn't be obtained, Native Americans made their own. Bifacial gunflints were not recovered from the Burr's Hill site.<sup>288</sup> In seventeenth century North American sites, the majority of gunflints recovered are usually of the spall type.<sup>289</sup> The Burr's Hill collection contains one spall gunflint held in the jaws of a cock.<sup>290</sup> Blanchette notes that "their rarity in the Burr's Hill collection is difficult to explain. It is possible that the Wampanoag needed gunflints so badly during that period that they could not afford to bury them with their dead."<sup>291</sup> Whether the objects were broken and useless in life or the materials were too precious to bury due to their limited quantities, the burial of European goods with Native American people demonstrates an interweaving of cultures and the Native American tendency to attribute some value and prestige to European firearms.

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>288</sup> Blanchette, 68.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

### RECONSTRUCTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE ATTACK

#### Primary Source Evidence

Benjamin Church, a prominent English military figure, was commissioned to find Philip as the war waned, and he recruited Sakonnet allies. With their help, Church's company breached the hitherto impenetrable swamps of New England.<sup>292</sup> Church was not the first to employ Native American allies against the enemy; Connecticut forces had relied on the Mohegans, Pequots and Niantics since the beginning of the war.<sup>293</sup>

Church's Sakonnet allies versed him in wilderness warfare. The Sakonnets insisted that silence was essential when in pursuit of the enemy; the English had a tendency for leather shoes, thick pants and conversation, which contributed to their frequent discoveries by the Native Americans, who were silent and deft in the New England forests.<sup>294</sup> Philbrick suggests that “perhaps the most important lesson Church learned from the Sakonnets was never to leave a swamp the same way he had entered it. To do otherwise was to walk into an ambush.”<sup>295</sup>

In *The History of King Philip's War* by Benjamin Church, he details the Native American-style war tactics he used during the attack on Philip and his followers on August 12, 1676. While tracking Philip, Church and his colonial soldiers and Native American allies used the method of secret and sudden attacks to take “great Numbers of

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<sup>292</sup> Philbrick, 318.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

them Prisoners.”<sup>296</sup> Church is flexing in his telling of his military maneuvers and heroism, but he evidences the influence of aboriginal warfare and strategies through his narrative.

Church wrote that he “always Marched at a wide distance one from another, partly for their safety: and this was an Indian custom, to March thin and scatter.”<sup>297</sup>

Church also learned:

That the Indians gain'd great advantage of the English by two things; The Indians always took care in their Marches and Fights, not to come too thick together. But the *English* always kept in a heap together, that it was as easy to hit them as to hit an House. The other was, that if at any time they discovered a company of English Souldiers in the Woods, they knew that there was all, for the *English* never scattered; but the *Indians* always divided and scattered.<sup>298</sup>

In his pursuit of Philip, Church positioned himself at one end of a swamp where the Wampanoag sachem took refuge, and ordered his men to distribute themselves around the perimeter; he was met with “a great number of the Enemy, well armed, coming out of the Swamp. But on fight of the English they seemed very much surprised and tack'd short.”<sup>299</sup> Though the Native American enemy was well-armed, they were surprised and thus disadvantaged. Church then threatened an overwhelming attack by his hidden soldiers if the enemy fired a shot. Church wrote: “They seeing both Indians and English come so thick upon them, were so surprised that many of them stood still and let the English come and take the Guns out of their hands, when they were both charged and

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<sup>296</sup> Benjamin Church, *The History of King Philip's War*, ed. Henry Martyn Dexter (Boston: J.K. Wiggin, 1865), 31.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

cock'd."<sup>300</sup> The element of surprise was an extremely potent and effective tool; even when the two sides were matched in terms of weaponry. If one group was caught off guard, it rendered their weapons less effective because they were overpowered and limited in their actions due to the military tactic of surprise and ambush executed by the enemy.

Philip eluded capture in that initial forest confrontation, and the colonial army retired to rest for a few days; Church then received information that Philip had made camp at Mount Hope; according to an informant, Philip was “in the south end of the miery swamp just at the foot of the Mount.”<sup>301</sup> Early on the morning of August 12, after a few days in pursuit, Church and his company finally approached Philip's camp. Like he did previously in a forest combat situation, Church stationed his company, made up of no more than 24 men, around the periphery of the swamp where Philip and his men had made camp.<sup>302</sup>

Church's company crawled on their bellies as they approached Philip's camp, and:

Capt. *Church* knowing it was *Philips* custom to be fore-most in the flight, went down to the Swamp and gave Capt. *Williams* of *Situate* the command of the right wing of the Ambush, and placed an *English-man* and an *Indian* together behind such shelters of Trees, &c. that he could find, and took care to place them at such distance as none might pass undiscovered between them...<sup>303</sup>

In the eastern portion of the swamp, two of Church's men met Philip as he attempted an escape. According to Church, Philip attempted to escape and ran towards two of Church's men waiting in ambush. Though the Englishman's musket misfired, a Pocasset ally

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Church, 43.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 334-5.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 44.



named Alderman shot and killed Philip as he ran.<sup>304</sup> The waiting men: “let him come fair within shot, and the English mans Gun missing fire, he bid the Indian fire away, and he did so to purpose, sent one musket bullet thro’ his heart, and another two inches from it; he fell upon his face in the mud and water with his gun under him.”<sup>305</sup> Church’s account shouldn’t be misconstrued as a flawless narrative of the war; it comes with its own set of biases. Church’s account, also, shouldn’t be considered a precise re-telling of the final and fatal attack on Philip. It evidences Church’s use of aboriginal military tactics but in terms of physical re-creating the attack, it’s not precise.<sup>306</sup>

### **Archaeological Evidence: RI 5**

On Brown University Mount Hope property is a monument commemorating the approximate location of King Philip’s death. The monument reads: “In the ‘Miery Swamp’ 165 feet W.S.W. from this spring, according to tradition, King Philip fell, August 12, 1676, U.S. This stone placed by the R.I. Historical Society December, 1877.” Kevin Smith, deputy director and chief curator at the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology at Brown University, said the site (RI 5) is not actually the site of Philip’s assassination but merely the site where a monument was placed in the nineteenth century to commemorate his death.<sup>307</sup>

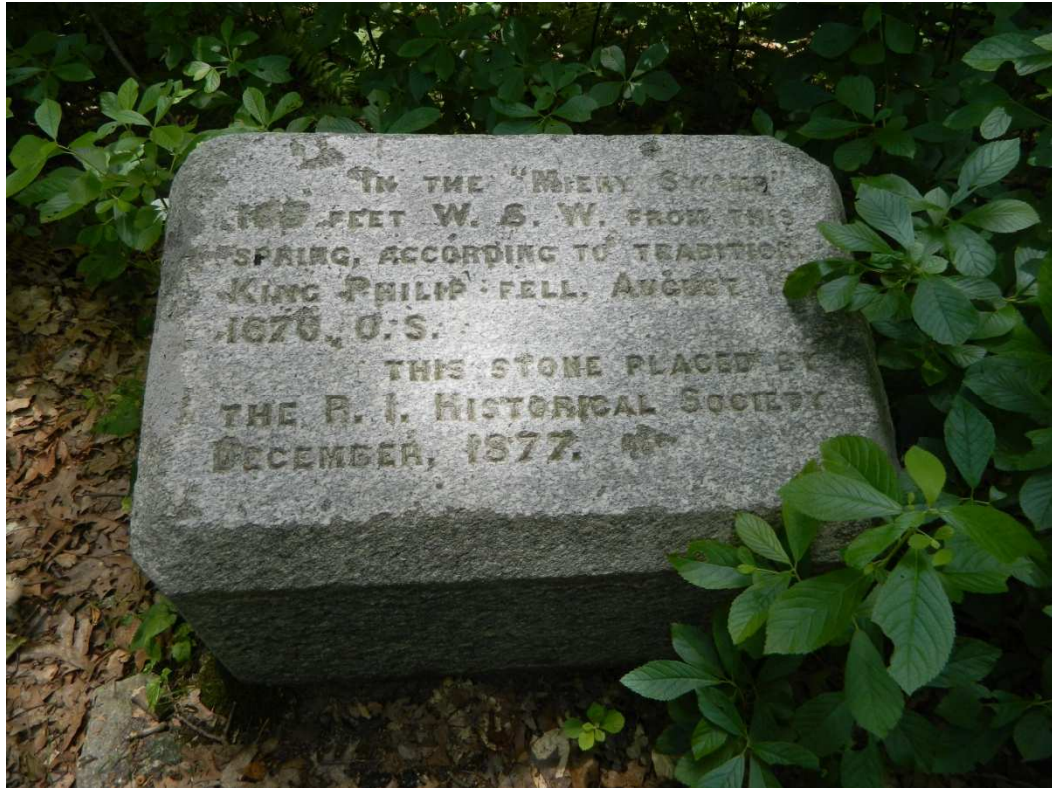
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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 336-7.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>306</sup> Kevin Smith, deputy director and chief curator, Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, e-mail message to author, Nov. 20, 2018.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.



Plaque at RI 5. Photo by author, August, 2018.

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission was established in 1968 by an act of the General Assembly to develop a statewide preservation program under the umbrella of the United States Department of the Interior's National Park Service. The RIHPHC is charged with many responsibilities, including the conduction of state-wide surveys of historic properties, recommending places for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and regulating archaeological exploration on state lands.<sup>308</sup> RI 5 is one such site; the earliest record of RI 5 in the RIHPHC archives dates to August, 21, 1975. The site was surveyed that year, according to the state archive for the site. Many of the entries into the state archaeological

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<sup>308</sup> Robinson et al., i.

site files in the early years of RIHPHC contain sites already known by researchers to exist; several located on Brown University's Mount Hope property were reported to the RIHPHC in the 1970s. The site where Philip allegedly died, known as the "Cold Spring Site," was among them.<sup>309</sup> In fact, many of the first few hundred entries in the state's site files, housed at the RIHPHC, are previously recorded sites from nonprofessionals, strings of new sites from academics or cultural resource management surveys, or previously recorded sites from the Haffenreffer Museum or the Rhode Island Historical Society recollections or records.<sup>310</sup> RI 5 lies on Brown University property and is located ¼ of a mile off the museum access road to the right; the 1975 site file mentions a locked gate and fence, but in August 2018 there was no locked gate at the threshold of the forest path to reach the monument. On site, near the monument, is a stone structure, used by Indians in the 1970s for commemorative celebrations.<sup>311</sup>

Smith, an archaeologist, conducted a non-invasive metal detector survey on portions of Brown's property in 2003-2004. He was searching for concentrations of metals that could help identify old cabin sites or areas of formal dumping.<sup>312</sup> A concern then was that Mouth Hope was a major village site from the time of King Philip's War.<sup>313</sup> There was no recovery of materials from locations where archaeologists discovered sub-surface metal.<sup>314</sup> It was difficult for the archaeologists to identify any real concentrations since 350 years of Euro-American farming and occupation on the property had resulted in

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<sup>309</sup> Tim Ives, archaeologist, RIHPHC, e-mail to author, Nov. 20, 2018.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Suzanne Abel, "Rhode Island Archaeological Survey: Preliminary Record, RI-BR-3, Site Number 5," Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission Records (21 August 1975).

<sup>312</sup> Smith, e-mail to author.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

a continuous scatter of garbage across the landscape.<sup>315</sup> But, the area around the spring did have a relatively large concentration of metal “hits,” which hinted to the possibility of a Contact Period occupation. To test the possibility, archaeologists put in three 1x1 meter test units (two on the terrace above the spring and one in an area of very high-density “hits” in the low-lying swampy area to the side of the spring). The terrace test units demonstrated the metal “hits” there were from nails associated with nineteenth century glass and ceramics; at considerably greater depth in one of the test units, archaeologists found quartz debitage in sandy deposits, suggesting limited prehistoric occupation or activity near the spring. Nothing implied occupation or activity there in the seventeenth century. The test unit in the swampy area to the side of the spring’s outlet had even more nails and a significant concentration of late nineteenth-century wine glass fragments and eating vessels.<sup>316</sup> There was nothing there to indicate prehistoric or contact period activity but archaeologists were not able to excavate deeply as the unit flooded.<sup>317</sup> In the units excavated, there was no evidence to indicate any activity around the spring during the time of King Philip’s War. The surface layers of the three units opened were consistent with partying and picnicking around the site of the Historical Society’s monument ca. 1870s-1890s.<sup>318</sup> Smith suspects the nails on the terrace reflect the location of structures or shelters for picnics while the concentration of glass and ceramics in the swamp area was a picnic dump.<sup>319</sup> Archaeologists saw limited suggestions of much earlier reduction of quartz linked to prehistoric quarrying of the white quartz seams on Mount Hope; its depth, though, seemed inconsistent with anything as recent as the seventeenth century,

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Smith, e-mail to author.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

and given the access that the Wampanoag had to European metal tools by the time of King Philip's War, it seems unlikely that this work with local quartz would date to the seventeenth century.<sup>320</sup> With early, buried evidence of prehistoric and historic activity, RI 5 is more than the site of a monument. But Smith wrote that nothing suggests or confirms the location of a battle site. There are several sites of archaeological and historical interest on Brown's property, according to Smith, including two on the western side of the property that he dated to the sixteenth- seventeenth century and one on the northeast edge of the property that produced a Late Woodland Levanna point made from Attleboro Red Felsite. There are memories, too, of an Archaic site (5,000 to 3,000 years old) that was washed away in a hurricane in the 1950s.<sup>321</sup> All of these sites document Native American presence and activity on the Brown University Mount Hope property, but they do not suggest or confirm a contact period village or battle sites on the property. Aside from Smith's work from 2003 to 2010, there were other surveys and some digging done in the 1950s and 1970s, but no inquiries revealed any information to support a village or battle site on the Mount Hope property.<sup>322</sup> With no archaeological evidence to confirm RI 5 as the site where King Philip fell, the exact location can continued to be guessed and chased but may forever remain a mystery.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Smith, e-mail to author. Smith was referring to Hurricane Carol, 1954.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Though it seems likely there are no battle-related artifacts buried in the area, the Nipsachuck battlefield in North Smithfield, like RI 5, was littered with eighteenth- and twentieth-century artifacts when archaeologists studied it in 2013. It was discovered that many older battle-related objects, dated to the time of King Philip's War, were "hiding" behind the newer objects. See Kevin McBride et al., National Park Service, American Battlefield Protection Program Technical Report, *The 1676 Battle of Nipsachuck: Identification and Evaluation*, April 12, 2013, <http://www.kpwar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/FINAL-REPORT-Nipsachuck.pdf>, 9-10.

## The Archaeology of War

Dr. Kevin McBride et al. conducted a battlefield archaeology survey of the Nipsachuck Battlefield and Nipsachuck Ceremonial Area in North Smithfield, Rhode Island (a site approximately 30 miles away from RI 5 in Bristol) and published the results in a technical report in 2013. Known as the Second Battle of Nipsachuck, the attack took place early in July, 1676; a force of 300 Connecticut dragoons and 100 Pequot and Mohegan conducted a successful surprise attack on a Narragansett camp of at least 170 people. 125 Narragansett were killed in the attack.<sup>324</sup> Approximately 150 battle-related and domestic objects within the 67-acre battlefield were identified. The researchers reasoned that the nature and distribution of the battle-related artifacts would reveal the avenues of attacks by the colonists and their allies.<sup>325</sup> If battle-related objects were recovered from RI 5, it might be possible for researchers to trace the battle, like McBride et al. did. Since no such objects have been recovered there yet, researchers must heavily rely on colonial sources, which aren't entirely accurate in regards to battle re-structuring. McBride et al. conducted the battlefield analysis on the Second Battle of Nipsachuck, in part, to "understand how the weapons and tactics of the various combatants influenced the battles."<sup>326</sup> A battlefield analysis of RI5 that yielded physical evidence would have been invaluable to this research. The lack of archaeological evidence at the site of King Philip's death (wherever it may be) results in an understanding of the past that, though still valid, is less complete. McBride et al. provide a rich and nuanced analysis of the Second Battle of Nipsachuck by adding archaeological evidence. Their battlefield

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<sup>324</sup> McBride et al., 8.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 38.

analysis relied heavily on the nature and distribution of round lead shot (or musket balls) across the battlefield.<sup>327</sup> At the Mattity Swamp battlefield the direction of fire could be determined for nineteen of the musket balls; direction of fire is a “very significant factor in reconstructing the nature, movement, and progress of a battle.”<sup>328</sup> No such artifacts were recovered at RI 5 in the years of various surveys and test pits.

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<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

## CHAPTER 6

### MEMORY

Lepore argues that how wars are remembered can be just as important as how they were fought and first described.<sup>329</sup> War generates acts of narration, and this narration can take the form of oral traditions or written traditions. Both war and the words used to describe it serve to define the geographical, political, cultural, racial and/or national boundaries between people.<sup>330</sup> Memory, then, is especially important to people who didn't have written traditions. DeLucia writes: "Memory has its own logic and faculties for recalling, forgetting, or silencing the past, and it merits serious consideration as a form of historical knowledge, particularly among communities that have valued nonwritten strategies for transmitting the past to posterity."<sup>331</sup> Though memory and the disclosure and dissemination of that memory via oral tradition is a valid version of history for the Native Americans of New England, their extermination and dislocation at the close of King Philip's War affected how their version of the war is remembered today.

In the century that followed King Philip's War, colonists erected few permanent monuments. DeLucia argues that this hesitance stemmed from Protestant wariness about graven images and also financial depletion after the war, "and it resulted in a principally invisible commemorative landscape in which settler verbal accounts animated key points."<sup>332</sup> DeLucia argues that Rhode Islanders created a "memoryscape" that recollected their area's engagements with Narragansetts and Wampanoags, and Zachariah

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<sup>329</sup> Lepore, x.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> DeLucia, 979.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 981.



Allen (1795-1882) exemplified these tendencies.<sup>333</sup> Born in Providence and educated at Brown University, Allen built his fortune through textile enterprises, yet he remained a devoted champion and advocate for the past. The Rhode Island Historical Society was founded in 1822, and Allen became president of the organization. Allen “was a tireless speaker and writer on historical topics, organized group outings to notable sites, and was a principal architect of public memory during the state's colonial revival.”<sup>334</sup> The colonial revival was a late nineteenth-century movement that encouraged interest in America's colonial heritage, especially on the East Coast; it tended to foster a sanitized view of the past “that seemed reassuring and morally sound in an era of rapid social transformation.”<sup>335</sup> Allen paid homage to the grave site of Benjamin Church in Little Compton and personally funded renovations for the crumbling grave stone. The grassroots efforts in the centuries proceeding the end of King Philip's War and before the twentieth century to memorialize the New England landscape contrasts with more concerted efforts by historical societies and, more notably, Native American tribes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The lag in the erection of Native American-sponsored monuments speaks to their struggle to regain lost territory and power since colonization.

DeLucia argues that land is a “potent vector of memory production” and she takes a place-based approach to “restore a dimension of cultural practice typically unseen and unheard.”<sup>336</sup> She notes that locals and travelers in South County, Rhode Island, gravitate to the “Great Swamp Fight” monument in South Kingstown, which memorializes the

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<sup>333</sup> DeLucia, 982.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 978.

massacre of Narragansetts that took place in South County, Rhode Island on December 19, 1675. Colonial militia shot or burned to death hundreds of Narragansetts and Wampanoag refugees.<sup>337</sup>



Great Swamp Monument, South Kingstown, Rhode Island. February, 2018. Photo by author.

The road that leads to the monument is called Great Swamp Monument Road, off of Route 2 in South Kingstown. The monument's plaques are broken and some of the stone inscriptions are dull. According to one plaque, the monument was erected by the Rhode Island Society of Colonial Wars in 1908. The plaque reads: “Attacked within their fort upon this island the Narragansett Indians made their last stand in King Philip's War and were crushed by the united forces of the Massachusetts Connecticut and Plymouth

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<sup>337</sup> DeLucia, 980.

Colonies in the 'Great Swamp Fight' Sunday 19 December 1675.” With such an inscription, the monument acts less like a somber and sympathetic ode to the massacred Narragansett and Wampanoag people. The plaque's language calls attention to the victors and touts their military prowess in “crushing” the ambushed Narragansetts and Wampanoags. If the Native Americans emerged from King Philip's War victorious, the language on the plaque would be different.

The “Great Swamp Fight” monument is one example of a physical structure in New England that was facilitated by non-native groups. A marker at Burr's Hill park in Warren, though, was facilitated by Wampanoag people in May 2017; a group from Martha's Vineyard, specifically.<sup>338</sup> The marker reads: “While memories of this land spark the fires of his spirit, let the smoke rise in prayerful respect to Wampanoag Massasoit '8SÂMEEQAN' Yellow Feather Esteemed Leader of the Wampanoag Nation his vision and 1621 treaty upheld fifty-four years of peace with early English settlers.” Along with the installation of the marker, the Wampanoags also reinterred the artifacts recovered from previous excavations in the early twenty-first century, which were previously under the ownership of various libraries and museums, including the Heffenreffer Museum and George Hail Free Library.<sup>339</sup> The marker's language does not mention the reinterment of the artifacts, nor is there any physical indication where exactly in the park they are buried. This may be to protect from looters and it could also stem from a desire to respect the dead. Writing in 1935, Princess Red Wing, Narragansett tribal historian, notes the tendency of Native Americans in New England to refrain from or minimize a narration of death: “New England Indians believed death to be the 'great mystery' and did not

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<sup>338</sup> Patricia Redfearn, director of the George Hail Free Library, telephone interview by author, Jan. 15, 2018.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

speculate upon it or explain it to their young.”<sup>340</sup> Lepore notes that changing names was not uncommon for the Native American tribes of New England, and uttering the name of a dead person was considered a grievous wrongdoing.<sup>341</sup> In 1665, Philip himself traveled to Nantucket to kill a Native American who had spoken the name of his dead father, Massasoit.<sup>342</sup>



Burr's Hill. Marker commissioned by the Wampanoag Tribe. Leaning against it is a library loan of *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes* by Michael Johnson; other small tokens like orange feathers and an American flag are nearby. February, 2018. Photo by author.

The language of the marker honors Massasoit, the leader of the Wampanoag people before his son, Philip, took control. It refers to the “memories of the land,” or the scars the war left behind. Though they cannot be forgotten, the language of the marker notes that peace existed before the carnage, and Massasoit's successful treaty guaranteed those fifty-four years of peace. The “Great Swamp Fight” monument was erected in the

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<sup>340</sup> Princess Redwing and Ernest Hazard, “The Narragansett Dawn,” *Special Collections Publication* (Miscellaneous), Paper 5, (2006) [http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/sc\\_pubs/5](http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/sc_pubs/5).

<sup>341</sup> Lepore, xx.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

early twentieth century by a non-Native American group and touts colonial heroics, victory and utter defeat of an unsuspecting group of Narragansetts and Wampanoags. The Burr's Hill marker was erected about 100 years later by a group of Wampanoag people and recognizes a Wampanoag leader that kept the peace with European for years, before tensions came to a head with King Philip's War. The stark differences between the war monuments reveal what certain communities choose to memorialize. Lepore is recognized as the authority on written memory and landscape memory as it pertains to King Philip's War. For some communities, wartime glory and victory are commemorated. For others, it is the calm before the storm that is memorialized in the landscape, a time before a culture was almost completely exterminated. Winners tout what they win, and the defeated mourn what they lost. These feelings manifest in monuments like the "Great Swamp Fight" monument and the Burr's Hill marker that dot the New England landscape today.

Many remnants of King Philip's War in Bristol, Rhode Island today coalesce in the form of street names and modern establishments. Metacom Avenue is a major artery in the town; King Philip Motors is the name of an auto repair shop on Metacom Avenue. Some remnants are subtle, while others are overt.<sup>343</sup> A statue in Independence Park depicts a replica of Christopher Columbus's flagship. A plaque on the statue reads: "In recognition of Bristol's cultural diversity and commemoration of the Columbus quincentennial/The Bristol, Rhode Island Heritage and Discovery Committee/October 12, 1992." A statue that claims to honor the cultural diversity of Bristol omits any sign of Native American influence in that diversity; there are no Native American images on the statue, there is only the colonial ship. It's also interesting that Columbus's voyage is

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<sup>343</sup> Lepore, epilogue.

honored over the seventeenth century English inhabitation of Bristol; the colonization of Rhode Island then and the outbreak of King Philip's War more directly affected Bristol's cultural diversity than did Columbus's voyage in the fifteenth century. But the Bristol, Rhode Island Heritage and Discovery Committee may have chosen to commemorate Columbus's voyage over the New England pilgrims precisely because it is farther removed and less personal. The plaque's mention of cultural diversity is perhaps a noble attempt at commemorating the Native Americans who lost their lives, but it's still too subtle and sterile to be a fair and true honor of the aboriginal inhabitants.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

Almost 400 years removed, it's easy to detach ourselves emotionally from the people who experienced the war. The man referred to today in scholarly journals and books today is known as Philip, but he wasn't actually Philip at all; he was called something else by his people. The Wampanoag sachem had a family and a life, and it was interrupted by outside forces that eventually killed him. Those forces also killed almost everyone he knew and took ownership of his land. Such wounds are too deep to fix with state names, park names and statues. The acknowledgements and honors help, but they don't erase the past and the future it shaped. It's hard not to dwell on it. To think how things could have been if only people then made different choices.

Charles Hughes, a Korean War veteran, writes: "While we do not experience the manifold buzzing confusion of life as a story, we do require the ordering and sequencing of events for understanding; we need narrative to make sense of our experiences."<sup>344</sup> To make sense of the natural world and cultural events, people use language- a tool that creates borders and categories in life. Sometimes language fails to express feelings adequately, especially the pain and violence of war. Jill Lepore argues that when people cannot name their suffering: "reality itself becomes confused, even unreal. But we do not remain at a loss for words for long. Out of the chaos we soon make new meanings of our world, finding words to make reality real again."<sup>345</sup> For people, language can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Written narrative is held in high esteem

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<sup>344</sup> Charles Hughes, *Accordion War: Korea 1951*, (Hell Kreek Brook, 2011) xiii.

<sup>345</sup> Lepore, x.

perhaps because it makes tangible something that is not. It also lasts longer than its creator, and so it serves as a piece of the person who created it and left it behind. Writing doesn't die. The English colonists reflected, argued, and memorialized with written narration. As Lepore has extensively researched, more than 400 letters dated from June 1675 to August 1676 survive in New England archives alone; there are more than 30 editions of 20 different printed accounts. The Native Americans who were defeated in King Philip's War did not document their experiences on paper, they spoke them.<sup>346</sup>

There were a number of factors which led to the colonial victory in King Philip's War, but the adoption of Native American war tactics was more influential than a discrepancy in weapons. The colonists and the Native Americans were pretty even-handed when it came to their military hardware. The Native Americans already had a sufficient arsenal before the Europeans arrived in the New World, and they were skilled in mitigating the shortcomings of their aboriginal weapons. Quickly, too, the Native Americans adopted European guns and supplemented their weapon caches. The colonists were the victors in King Philip's War, though, because they adopted military tactics that were suitable for the New England wilderness. This coupled with the English tendency for total warfare and the lifeline to England for provisions guaranteed that the colonists would use the tactics ruthlessly and without limitation and thus secure the war victory. Rhode Island monuments reveal the intricacies of war and memory for the communities that were involved. King Philip's War left scars that are still felt by some and seen by many today.

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<sup>346</sup> Lepore, chapter 2.



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